

The Hanging Tree

(part two)

By Robert Hutchison

This is a continuation of a piece that was published in the August issue of this publication concerning the well-planned triple homicide of Stott, Scott and Wilson, on August 11, 1888.

Jeff (Billy) Wilson and James Scott were hung from a ponderosa pine tree that now bears the chevron V reflector indicating the General George Crook Trail, which was established in 1870. The tree is 22 inches in diameter and has been cut off 10 feet high to preserve the “V” trail marker. The tree has approximately 275 annual rings.

The other ponderosa used, to hang Jamie Stott, is 19 inches in diameter and is the only other available tree of that time period. It also still stands at the junction of the two trails indicated in the book *They Shot Billy Today*, by Leland J. Hanchett, Jr.

Rope burns still exist on the tree limb used to repeatedly hoist and torture Jamie Stott. Dendrochronology is the science of annual tree ring growth used to identify the two specific trees used in the triple homicide. Both trees are well within Coconino County, and not Apache County—of that time period—which changes the investigative venue of the crimes. As the triple homicide has no statute of limitation, Coconino County must respond, and this would be the very first investigation of the case.

This author’s telephone records will show that he has contacted the appropriate law enforcement agencies in Flagstaff, including Sheriff Pribil, U.S. Marshal’s Office (Shane and Liz), FBI units in Arizona and New Mexico, Congresswoman Anne Kirkpatrick, cold-case investigator J.J. Albeita in Phoenix, Sen. John McCain in Washington, D.C., Sen. Carlyle Begay, Gov. Doug Ducey, Sen. Sylvia Allen and several others.

One hundred twenty-eight years of secrecy and silence have been met with even more of the same, as not one call has been returned from any of the above-named persons.

According to author Leland J. Hanchett, Jr.’s book, *The Crooked Trail to Holbrook*, a dude rancher and his foreman of Aripine, Arizona dug up and robbed the bodies in the 1940s, taking a gold ring from Jamie Stott’s skeletonized finger. The divorced bride for whom the ring was resized had it in her jewelry box in 1992 and refused to return the ring to the Stott family. Even after nearly 128 years, it would be appropriate to return it to the Stott/Burt family.

This author has personally witnessed and photographed three separate gravesites bearing the name Jamie Stott. Using ground penetrating radar, we discovered the two graves of Scott and Wilson are occupied and that Stott’s grave is empty. The second grave that Leland J. Hanchett, Jr. and his wife are standing over in a photo is occupied, but not by Jamie Stott, as the name on the board indicates. Rumor has it that Boy Scouts placed the marker there. The marker is nearly two miles from the remote cemetery.

This author invited Journalist Brandon Loomis and photographer Patrick Shanahan of the *Arizona Republic* newspaper to the same location on the Mogollon Rim to do a documentary on our Arizona Rim horses on May 22 and 23, 2016. They rented horses from Wayne Ramey of Bison

Ranch Stables in Overgaard, Arizona and were on horseback searching to film our historic, educational and economically valued free-roaming horses. Brandon and Patrick had previously visited six other western states as part of the documentary, to be aired this coming fall. As it was near Memorial Day, we visited and placed flowers at all the gravesites that we encountered, including the third (true) machine-marbled gravesite of James Warren Stott.

James Lane Scott III came from a prominent family in Texas. Little is known about William Jefferson Wilson, other than the fact that he was an accomplished cowboy and a good cook. The last meal he prepared, on August 11, 1888, was for his comrades and 25 to 28 others, who were to become his murderers.

All photographs and research are the courtesy of Robert Hutchison and Ruthie Yeats.