

The Hanging Tree

Part V

By Robert Hutchison

On Friday, August 10, 1888, most of the 28 riders, if not all of them, met at the Bear Spring Ranch owned by Jamie Stott. This small ranch was located two miles west of the Aztec Spring Ranch, also owned by Stott. Many of the horses needed feed and water after having traveled over 125 miles in the three days to this location set by Owens, two months prior. On their way to the Hanging Tree...

Posse Members include:

1. Sheriff Commodore Perry Owens was, beyond a doubt, the executioner ordered to murder James Warren (Jamie) Stott, James Lane Scott III and William Jefferson Wilson on August 11, 1888. His accomplices were his deputies who were employees following orders. Owens, who was 37-years-old at the time, was the only elected law enforcement officer. After the previous Blevins massacre in September 1887, Owens (4'11" in height), needed his ego re-stretched and fed to its limit as it would soon be election time.
2. Deputy Sheriff James Dennis Hock; 41-years-old
3. Deputy Sheriff Hugo A. (Hook) Larson; 30-years-old
4. Deputy Sheriff St. George Creaghe (Apache County Board of Supervisor)
5. Deputy Sheriff Osmer D. Flake; 20-years-old
6. Jim Roberts (Indicted for previous murders and the most feared gunman in the Pleasant Valley War, he was always ready to be sworn in by Houck.); 28-years-old

Listed in the side bar in alphabetical order are the 22 spectators taken from published sources of the following books: "They Shot Billy Today," by Leland S. Hanchett, Jr.; "The Crooked Trail to Holbrook," by Leland S. Hanchett, Jr.; "Black Mesa," by Leland S. Hanchett Jr.; "Pleasant Valley War," by Jinx Pyle; "History of Gisela Arizona," by Jayne Peace; "A Little War of Our Own," by Don Dederer; Documentary: "Forgotten Gunfighters - Pleasant Valley War" "Those Days Are Gone Forever," by Bobbie Stephens Hunt; "Desert Lawmen," by Larry D. Ball and "Tombstone by Tombstone Vol. 1," by Tom Todd.

These men cannot be found guilty because they were misled over an extended period of time by the posse members. In 1888, our Constitution and Bill of Rights had been in place for 97 years and does not allow our private citizens to be entrapped, coerced, orchestrated, facilitated, prejudiced or inflamed to incite mob violence to commit a crime which they would not otherwise commit.

On page 92, in the book "The Mountain Meadow Massacre," it suggests who was behind the other one percent of the mystery murders by stating; 1. Who acquired the livestock, rangeland and water of Stott's Aztec Spring Ranch and Bear Spring Ranch...for 21 years after the murders. 2. Who would benefit by the ranches being burned to the ground to keep the area uninhabited until Mormon settler George Washington Bailey homesteaded it in 1909. Alert readers can follow the money trail to influential businessmen who could make strong suggestions to the aforementioned Apache County Board of Supervisors of that era.

Other testimony was given by Lanotte Clymer and Alfred Ingham which states: "The 'Sheriff' and his deputies, totaling 28 riders," meant that Houck was not leading! This honor belonged to Owens and he would not be "riding drag, eating dirt;" his ego would not have allowed it!

Look for our next mystery "Who murdered Al Fulton...in the January issue of Get Your Mountain On AZ..."

Sidebar

7. Joe Boyer
8. Bill Colcord
9. Harvey Colcord

10. N. J. Coleman
11. John L. Cline
12. Marion Derrick
13. Perle G. Ellison
14. Col. Jesse Ellison, Jr.
15. Jesse Ellison, Jr.
16. Fred Haught
17. Carter Hazelton
18. Lexi Heward
19. Tom Thorn
20. Charlie Meadows
21. William McFadden
22. Glenn Reynolds
23. John Rhodes
24. Ed Tewksbury
25. Jim Tewksbury
26. Bill Voris
27. Chub Watkins
28. George Wilson