



# THE WESTERNERS

## POTOMAC CORRAL

### ANNOUNCING NEXT MEETING

**DATE/TIME:** Wednesday, January 25, 11:30 AM

**PLACE:** Pier 7 (on Maine Ave. Waterfront)

**THIS IS A LUNCHEON MEETING**

Each attendee will order from the menu and pay the waiter individually

#### OFFICERS 2005-6

SHERIFF  
Vacant

DEPUTY SHERIFFS  
Mike Lawson  
Herman Viola  
Lowell Baier

TALLYMAN  
Gene Anderson

ROUNDUP FOREMAN &  
BOOKEROO FOREMAN  
Dale Anderson

CHUCK WRANGLER and  
FARO DEALER  
Chet Hanson

### OUR SPEAKER:

**Corral member**

**George C. Chalou**

### TOPIC:

“Lieutenant James Simpson

Discovers the Anasazi.”

#### FOR RESERVATIONS:

**Call Chet Hanson  
(Or leave message)  
(703)734-0858**

**By Sun. Eve. Jan. 21**

This topic developed out of a seminar given by Chalou at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in 2003 on the United States Army in the West and involves the first American to see and describe the ancient ruins of the Anasazi in the American Southwest.

George C. Chalou received his Ph. D. in American History from Indiana University and then taught in the History Department at The Ohio State University before joining the National Archives in 1971. His area of expertise at the Archives was military records. He retired from there in 1999. Since retirement he has done part time consulting. His research and publication areas include archival science, Indian-white relations, and American military history. In 1991 he directed a scholarly conference on WW II intelligence and then published *The Secrets War: The Office of Strategic Services in World War II*.

### 2006 DUES ARE DUE

Our dues to the National Organization should be paid in early 2006. They send us our copies of the *Buckskin Bulletin* based on this payment. Dues are \$15.00 per individual, \$20.00 for a family. Send checks payable to the Potomac Corral of the Westerners to Gene Anderson Tallyman, 619 Broad Creek Drive, Fort Washington, Maryland 20744.



## OCTOBER MEETING

Dr. Rudy Krutar gave an interesting presentation on his early life in Montana and displayed a number of artifacts from his family in the Montana Territory.

He also presented and discussed a short monograph he discovered in the National Archives titled "James A. Garfield's Diary of a Trip to Montana in 1872." It was published in 1900 as a notebook consisting of a journal or diary of this significant trip by Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The book drawing gem was won appropriately by the speaker: *A Tenderfoot in Montana: Reminiscences of the Gold Rush, the Vigilantes, and the Birth of the Montana Territory*, by



Francis M. Thompson. This book is the prize item of the Montana Historical Society.

(From an unpublished nook by the Potomac Corral of The Westerners; *Great Western Peace Officers*. 1989)

## JOHN SLAUGHTER

by  
Laurence Davis

Strong, silent, and self-righteous as Jehovah, John Slaughter, the fourth sheriff of Cochise County, Arizona, stands in legend as arch-type of the Western lawman-hero. Ramrod straight, piercing of eye, bewhiskered in the imperial style, he won his victories, it is claimed, by pure deed, not talk, without fore- or afterthought. No glory hunter he, nor boaster, he never notched his gun nor took pleasure in killing unless a man deserved it. His conversation consisted of monosyllables like "Hands up" or "I'll have the same;" but he always smiled when he talked to children. Getting information out of John Slaughter was like chiseling a granite crag. Legends adhere to such men like swallows' nests on certain cliffs, until finally the bed-rock is wholly hidden under the accumulated guano.

John H. Slaughter was born in Louisiana October 2, 1841. After a boyhood spent working on cattle ranches in Maverick County, Texas, he served as a Confederate soldier, and after the war as a Texas Ranger, tracking down cattle rustlers and horse thieves.

What happened to his first wife, or even her name, is a mystery. One story has her kidnapped by Comanches. Slaughter rode alone to the Indians' camp to reclaim her, but returned empty handed. She had either died in captivity, or perhaps preferred life with the savages to that of

her life with John Slaughter.

By the early 1870s Slaughter was acting as trail boss of his own herds in the Pecos country of western Texas and eastern New Mexico. Utterly fearless, on one occasion he confronted the biggest and most ruthless of New Mexico cattlemen, John Chisum. He found 60 steers bearing his brand in Chisum's herd. Chisum showed him a bill of sale for the steers—signed by a rustler. Slaughter told Chisum the low price alone should have told him something was wrong, and he intended to take back what was his. And then Slaughter took the steers from under the very gun barrels of Chisum's hired desperadoes.

Only once did a human being get the drop on John Slaughter. It was at point blank range, and Slaughter prevented the fatal shot by sticking his thumb under the hammer.

After Ed Schefflein's great silver strike in 1877 at Tombstone, John Slaughter moved his herd and all other worldly goods to the southeastern corner of Arizona, which was to become Cochise County. Schefflein had been told he would find nothing in that area but his own tombstone, hence the name he gave his mine and the town that grew up around it to become the county seat.

On the way to Arizona Slaughter passed through Tularosa, New Mexico, and paused to marry the beautiful Viola Howell, a woman as striking as himself. His courtship consisted of only one word—"Come."

Accompanied by his new wife and his giant servant known to history in the blunt language of the nineteenth century only as "Nigger Jim," Slaughter pressed on west-

ward. He soon found in his path the notorious Bad Man from Bitter Creek, an outlaw whose last name was Gallagher. The Bad Man had thirteen notches on his gunstock and room for plenty more. He politely informed Slaughter that a hundred or so of his steers had somehow got mingled in Slaughter's herd, and he would have to cut them out. Slaughter knew Gallagher from the Pecos country and knew he would steal anything that wasn't nailed down. He also knew a dark secret of Gallagher's, which give him power over him. Slaughter knew Gallagher's real first name, which, contrary to popular belief, was nothing like "Bad Man."

"Nobody's cutting anything out of this herd," Slaughter said, and pronounced the unspeakable first name. Then he drove ahead, leaving the Bad Man paralyzed with shame and rage. Smoke issued from Gallagher's ears, and he swore a dreadful oath to slaughter Slaughter and all his cowboys, his beautiful wife, and the black giant Jim, and then confiscate a hundred percent, or more, of his herd.

As if John Slaughter's cold nerve, catlike watchfulness, and speed on the draw learned in his wartime and peacetime service were not enough to guarantee his charmed life, legend states he was assigned a special guardian angel who warned him whenever death was near. On this occasion the angel took human form as a local cowboy told Slaughter that Gallagher was planning to ambush him at the Chisum ranch. Slaughter noticed Gallagher coming toward him on horseback. As soon as he was close enough to hit the large target of Gallagher's horse, though not Gallagher himself, he fired. The horse fell, and Slaughter dismounted and ran forward to within range of the Bad Man before the latter could pull his leg out from under his dying steed.

Gallagher lived for several hours after Slaughter's bullet pierced him, and just before expiring cursed his parents for condemning him to a life of crime by naming him "Aloysius."

The Slaughters settled in 1879 at a new ranch on the San Pedro River near present day Hereford, Arizona. (They later moved to San Bernardino in the extreme southeastern corner of the county). John sold his herd so easily to feed the local miners and soldiers that he sent back several times to Texas for more cattle. Later, he imported cattle from Mexico, at great risk from bandits and Apaches, many of whom he had to shoot.

One time in those early days, while John and Viola Slaughter were in Tombstone on business, Ike Clanton of the Cowboy Gang raided their ranch of steers. John had a premonition of trouble; and as Ike herded the stolen steers around a bend in the road from Tombstone he was suddenly set upon by the Slaughters. Viola had the reins, like Brunhilde driving the chariot of Thor, while John sat in the bed of the wagon like the god himself, with a shotgun like a poised thunderbolt trained upon the outlaw. Ike returned the steers without a quibble and lived on to survive the famous gun fight at the O. K. Corral, where his

brother Billy and two other members of the gang perished.

John Slaughter was a great tracker and served General Crook against the Apaches in this capacity. He is said to have been present in Captain H. H. Lawton's camp in Skeleton Canyon when Geronimo surrendered. We have neither proved nor disproved these statements any more than most others about Slaughter; but a boy named Howell, probably a nephew of Mrs. Slaughter's, did tag along from the San Bernardino ranch to Crook's ill-fated meeting with Geronimo on March 25, 1886; and Captain Lawton and a detachment of cavalry did camp at Slaughter's ranch in August of the same year, to await General Miles on his way to the final surrender.

The rectangle of 3,979,520 unsurveyed acres at the southeastern corner of Arizona, where John Slaughter settled, was made the separate county of Cochise by the Territorial legislature in 1881. At the time it was probably the most lawless area in the United States. Acquired by forced purchase from Mexico only 28 years earlier, it swarmed with newcomers looking for a quick buck, miners, merchants, saloon keepers, gamblers, holdup men, pimps and prostitutes, and cattlemen like Slaughter himself. Because of its location on a virtually unguardable stretch of the international border, it also attracted



**John Slaughter 1841-1922**

smugglers and highjackers.

Even the aborigines of Cochise County were professional thieves, Apaches, a tribe whose economy rested on robbing neighbors. The government had taken these Indians' land and promised them a reservation in the Chiricahua Mountains of Cochise County, then reneged on the promise but kept the land. Now it was trying, only partially successfully, to remove the Chiricahua Apaches to the San Carlos Reservation or to Oklahoma, to civilize them, as if the United States government in those days was capable of civilizing anyone.

In old Cochise County it was hard to tell the good guys from the bad. These were the days of the open range, when strong men with armies of well-armed cowboys hogged, rent-free, the public grazing lands of the United States; and, like Chisum in New Mexico, founded their fortunes by being the first to get their brands on "mavericks" and "dogies." Now they called smaller operators "rustlers" for doing on a small scale what they had done on a large scale a short time before. Many "rustlers" were well regarded by their neighbors; they only stole from strangers. Thinking lawmen asked themselves, "Whose law am I supposed to enforce?" and many made deals with the so-called outlaws.

In desperation, men who wished to enjoy what they had grabbed, organized Law and Order Leagues and started ridding the county of "undesirables", that is, men they did not desire as neighbors. After repeated exhausting nights of lynching, some of these gentlemen concluded this was what their taxes were supposed to be used for. Why not elect a sheriff to clean up Cochise County? This

would take a skilled gunfighter, but there were lots of those in old Cochise. What they needed was one they could absolutely trust always to be on their side, that is, a successful cattleman who did not think too much. And so, somehow, they got John Slaughter elected in 1888.

He gave due process a fair trial. Sheriff Slaughter actually arrested his first rustler, one Juan Soto of Contention (a community nine miles south of Tombstone), and brought him to trial in the county seat. The jury acquitted. Arizona juries, unlike those in Texas, did sometimes acquit Mexicans. Slaughter never trusted a jury again. The next time he caught Soto with stolen property, he held a .45 against his head and gave him 45 minutes to get out of the county. Soto did, and this became Slaughter's treatment of choice for rustlers.

When he had to investigate a complaint of theft Slaughter preferred to go alone. He would usually bring back the stolen goods or animals, seldom the suspect. Were all the criminals dispatched to another county or to kingdom come? It was said that if Slaughter knew a man was guilty he would shoot him to avoid court costs and to make sure he would never be turned loose again. On the other hand, it is also said that he never killed except when it was essential. We do not know if there was a gap between the two principles. Slaughter never spoke of the men he killed, much less of those he let go; and, as stated above, never notched his gun. We know that once he sent Buzzard Head Jacobson to Mexico with funds supplied by the owner to "steal back" some mares stolen out of Cochise County. Buzzard Head bought them back. All we can safely say is that John Slaughter did not blow away everyone he failed to bend to his will.

Sheriff Slaughter never laid a hand nor got in his gunsight, the greatest desperado of the county. That was the Apache Kid, a reputed werewolf. Werewolves swarm Apache folklore. Where there is that much smoke there may be some fire. Many authorities state, to acquire the magical ability of changing from man to beast and back one must kill his own sister or brother. Joe Chisholm reports that though the Kid never killed a white woman or child he raped and murdered many Indian women. Perhaps he attained werewolfhood by the sheer number of these heinous crimes, for it is reputed that one cannot become a werewolf by killing any number of unrelated males, which the Kid also did excessively.

A nephew of Geronimo, by the white man's way of measuring kinship, the Apache Kid was the great renegade's son by Apache reckoning. He was raised by the white chief scout at San Carlos, the famed Al Sieber, who taught him English. Thus he was enabled to absorb the deepest wickedness of White as well as Indian culture.

He lived in deprecation. Born the same year as Billy the Kid (1860), the Apache Kid killed ten men for every one Billy killed. Neither in the United States nor Mexico could the civil lawmen nor the national armies themselves apprehend him. As the years passed and the Apache Kid remained free he was reported to have met death—in every mountain fastness between southern Sonora (the Mexican State immediately south of Arizona) and the Mogollon Rim. But the reports were wishful thinking. Always he appeared again at the site of another devilish deprecation. No wonder he was believed to have supernatural powers!

While Slaughter was tracking for General Crook and the Kid was still one of Sieber's scouts they had their first meeting. Slaughter, with his uncanny power of anticipating danger and his personal guardian angel, surely

ought to be the hero destiny would choose to destroy the werewolf. Yet he had long left the office of sheriff before any opportunity for the final confrontation presented itself.

One summer day in 1897 the fifty-six year old ex-sheriff sat on his verandah at San Bernardino looking back over a life of uninterrupted success, save for one nagging failure, his inability to run to ground the arch-enemy of law and order on the southwestern frontier.

Five years before an Indian woman recently kidnapped by the Apache Kid had stumbled exhausted into San Carlos to report him dead of tuberculosis in the Pilares de Torres Mountains of Mexico. It was highly unusual that the woman returned at all, for the Kid normally shot his women after they had served his lust. Perhaps after many false reports of his death this one was true! But Slaughter, with his preternatural powers still intact, knew it was false. Yet alone and out of public office he could do nothing to strike the coup de grace before the Grim Reaper should remove the Kid from all human justice.

Now, after five frustrating years, Slaughter was approached by a retired army officer, identified only as Captain Benton, who also felt his career was left unfulfilled by the Apache Kid's long escape from punishment. Slaughter and Benton, seated side by side on the porch swing at San Bernardino, decided, as Theodore Roosevelt would have put it, to be boys again. They would slip off to the Pilares, aided only by Nigger Jim, to place the missing capstone on their otherwise perfect lives.

The two elderly gentlemen did slip across the international border; they did enter the Pilares. At a place called La Pita Canyon, they quit their horses, cached their saddles, tied camouflaging brush to their heads, and donned Indian moccasins in place of their noisy boots. The last action not only exposed their feet to stone bruises, but resulted in severe backache for Slaughter, as low heels always do to habitual boot wearers. Then, despite the pain, the reversed horseshoes the Kid had nailed to his pony, and the Apache sing for "water" which the Kid had deliberately pointed away from the only spring in ten miles, they cornered him and after a fierce but brief gun fight killed him.

Before writing the above story Joe Chisholm asked John Slaughter point blank whether he had killed the Apache Kid. Slaughter steadfastly refused, as always, to speak of any man he had killed or let go. After many years Chisholm succeeded in drawing the story from a source other than Slaughter or Benton. Then, he asked Slaughter whether he could publish it. Slaughter said he guessed it wouldn't do any harm. Thus we are assured that the two aging Caucasians with aching backs actually did hunt down the tubercular Indian.

Slaughter died at San Bernardino in 1922.

**Laurence Davis**, a retired Government Lawyer from Arizona, once worked for the Navajo Tribe on its reservation. As a young sickly boy, he was brought to the pure air of Tucson by his mother. That was in 1932, and the first state governor, George W. P. Hunt, was still in office; Wyatt Earp was still alive, and Arizona still had pure air because the smelters were shut down. Davis graduated from Tucson High School in 1938. He grew up hearing early Arizona history and of such pioneers as John Slaughter. He is the author of an unpublished book on the By-a-lil-le uprising on the Navajo Reservation, and several unproduced plays.