

Tombstone Times™

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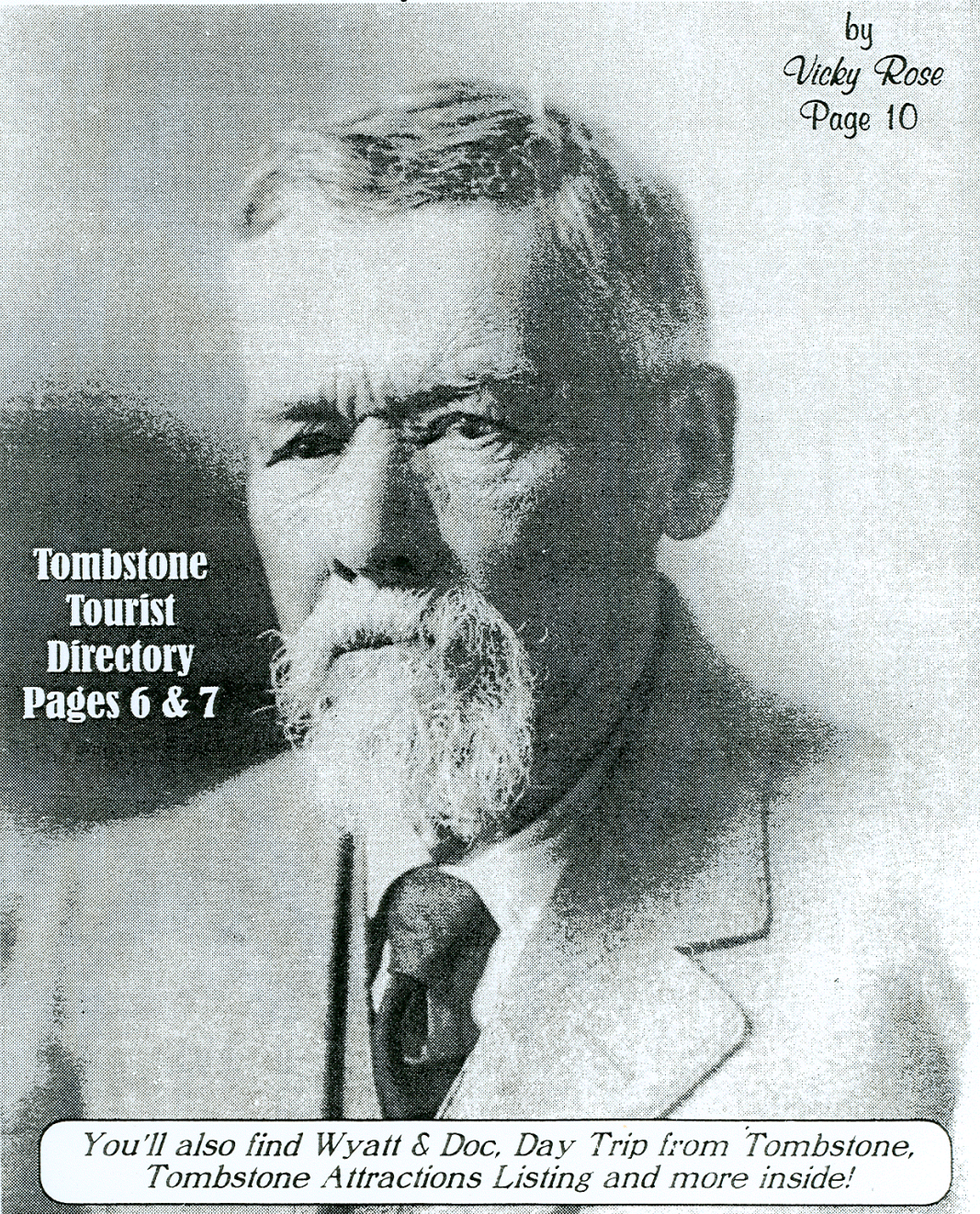
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JOHN H. SLAUGHTER

Guided by God or El Diablo?

by Vicky Rose

At the end of his warring days, the lawless Apache chief Geronimo was reduced to sitting in a Fort Sill, Okla., prison and letting tourists take his picture for 50 cents. An Anglo woman approached him and said she was the niece of John Slaughter. Geronimo looked up at her glumly and told her he wished two things before he died. One was to go back to Arizona, and the other was to "kill John Slaughter."

Geronimo had a good reason to loathe his old enemy. John Horton Slaughter, frontiersman, Confederate soldier and former Texas Ranger, wrecked havoc on the lawless element of the Old West. He became sheriff of Cochise County, wiping the face of southeastern Arizona clean of scum that threatened to suck the life out of it. In between times, he was a trail-driver, legislator, banker and most of all, a cattle-king. Slaughter's fearlessness in driving raiding Apaches out of Arizona earned him the hatred of Geronimo and his brethren.

This description brings to mind an image of a huge man, perhaps resembling John Wayne, but nothing could be further from the truth. Slaughter barely reached 5-foot-6-inches tall. He was highly asthmatic, probably had a touch of tuberculosis, and was so afraid of lightning; even as an old man he would sit in the house with the shades drawn to blot out the sight of it. Unlike the rough and tough father he resembled in almost all ways, who, even after amassing a fortune in ranching, continued to wear a Mexican serape around his shoulders instead of a suit, Slaughter loved expensive clothes, and he always wore a vest. He started every casual sentence he spoke with the words, "I say, I say." Nevertheless, Slaughter was a solidly built, handsome man with dark, olive skin, deep-set eyes, a strong nose and a wide mouth with lips that were neither too thick nor too thin. Despite his unusual habit of saying, "I say, I say," he spoke very little. His sentences to outlaws were terse and to the point. "Put your hands up," or "hit the trail." He might go so far as to say, "lay down or be shot down," but even as he spoke, his lips barely moved. Such was his reputation; to see him with gun in hand was enough to send many a weak-kneed criminal scurrying away.

Slaughter gave his first howl in Louisiana in 1841 as his parents, originally from Virginia, were making their way to Texas. Years later, when he was known as "Texas John Slaughter," it irked him to have to explain that he was actually born in a state he had almost nothing to do with. His father fought in the Texas Revolution; his cousin had been the courier between Sam Houston and the Alamo. While in his teens, Slaughter and his family left Central Texas and moved south of San Antonio, establishing ranches in Atascosa and Frio counties. As a young man, Slaughter fought hostile Indians and plundering bandits. He joined the Confederacy but was sent home because of his weak lungs. He later joined the Frontier Division of the Texas State Troops, where

he fought to keep the Indians, not Union soldiers, at bay. While in the Army and later in the Texas Rangers, he established a reputation as being a fearless fighter and dead shot.

After the war, Slaughter moved back to South Texas, first joining his brothers in ranching, and later establishing his own ranch that spread across both Atascosa and Frio counties. He became one of the first men to herd cattle up the Chisholm Trail. Slaughter liked good company, but he also liked to play a lone hand, and even in a land of mavericks, he became known as an individualist.

While in his 20's, Slaughter began to think about moving away from South Texas. His biographers write that he wanted to leave Texas because it was "overcrowded." However, an incident happened in the late 1860's that may have had another bearing on Slaughter's desire to leave Texas.

According to the genealogy records of the Church of Latter Day Saints, in 1867, Genoveva Lopez gave birth to a son in Atascosa County and named John Horton Slaughter as the father.

Beyond that single fact, everything else remains murky. In his thoroughly researched book, "The Southwest of John H. Slaughter," author Allen A. Erwin hints only that Slaughter was "something of a lady's man." He was, after all, a 26-year-old bachelor. To complicate matters, in 1871, Slaughter fell head over heels in love with his neighbor's diminutive blonde daughter, Eliza Adeline Harris. Her mother was dead set against the union, but her father was philosophical about it. They were married, and a year later, a daughter was born. A son soon followed, but he died, as did another girl.

In the meantime, a little boy named Manuel in Atascosa County was said to be his son. This had to cause pain and friction for all parties involved, but it is impossible today to judge the circumstances. Except for her name, the boy's mother is a mystery. However, it is known that all his life, Slaughter loved children, and their race or color did not matter to him. When his little adopted Apache daughter, Patchy, died, he sat in a rocker on his front porch and grieved for days.

For whatever reason, Slaughter began to look westward, and his eyes fastened on the part of New Mexico Territory that would later be known as Arizona. While on a trip there to scout out the land, his wife gave birth to another son and began preparations to move. Tragically, she became ill along the way. She died of smallpox in Tucson, and a grief-stricken Slaughter was left with two children to rear, one an infant. They came down with smallpox too, and the doctor wanted them removed to a pest house, but Slaughter refused, nursing them back to health himself.

Slaughter took his little family back to Texas, but kept the dream of moving to Arizona alive. The next year on a cattle drive,

Continued on next page



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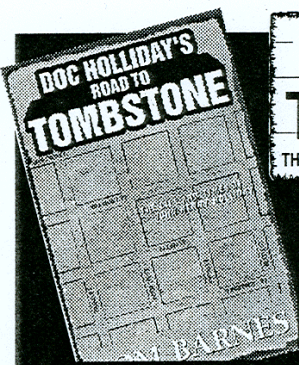
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he met a small rancher in New Mexico living near the Pecos River. This rancher had a beautiful 16-year-old daughter, full-busted, full-lipped and every inch a vivacious Southern belle. Love struck Slaughter again, and he began to woo the father into going to Arizona with him in order to woo the daughter. When it became apparent what his true intentions were, the girl's mother grew hysterical with opposition.

Not only did Slaughter have to deal with a hostile prospective mother-in-law, the governor of the territory was on his back. Lew Wallace's assignment in being appointed Governor of New Mexico Territory meant cleaning out the lawlessness that prevailed and restoring peace. Wallace, a former Union general, had bungled at the Battle of Shiloh, and he spent the rest of his career trying to live it down. Slaughter, a former Confederate, had a reputation of hiring the toughest cowhands around. Texas had been flooded with disillusioned ex-Confederates after the war, and many of them used their anger against the carpetbagger government that ensued as an excuse to turn to a life of crime. The areas that Slaughter ranched in were so rough in climate, soil and people, he had to have tough men, and it was the custom of the day not to ask questions about someone's past. Some of the cowboys welcomed on Slaughter's ranch were outlaws Clay Allison and Sam Bass.

Furthermore, in San Antonio, Slaughter had played cards with two cowboys named Gallagher and Boyd. The pot became bigger and bigger, money piling higher and higher on the table, and then suddenly Slaughter saw a move that involved a joker up a sleeve. As he was prone to do when he thought someone was cheating at cards, Slaughter pulled out his gun, swept the entire pot in his pockets and left the saloon. Later on the trail, Barney Gallagher decided to get even by killing Slaughter and robbing him of the money belt he habitually wore. Gallagher rode up to the end of Slaughter's herd and told one of his cowboys. "You tell that little rat-headed-sonofabitch up front, I'm here to kill him."

The cowboy replied, "Wait right here, I'll tell Mr. Slaughter what you said."

Slaughter came riding back, and Gallagher spurred his horse to meet him, and then turned to make sure the shotgun in his hands would hit his mark. Slaughter didn't waste time trying to argue or cajole; he pulled out his gun and shot Gallagher in the heart. It was ruled self-defense, but somehow this ruling got lost in red tape. Governor Wallace stopped his writing of the great novel, *Ben-Hur*,

long enough to give orders for Slaughter's arrest.

Slaughter could write too, and he wrote the governor a long letter proclaiming his innocence. Wallace dropped the murder charge, but had Slaughter's cattle impounded to await inspection. While Slaughter waited, 500 of his cattle died. A newspaper took his side and thrashed Wallace in print for the way he was treating cattle drovers, and Wallace backed off.

Slaughter may have lost 500 cows, but he won the lovely Viola Howell as his wife. He even won the affection and admiration of his mother-in-law, which was a good thing, because she moved in with them in later years.

Slaughter found the ranch he wanted, the San Bernardino, 65,000 acres laced with artesian wells situated on the Arizona/Mexico line. The Slaughters settled down to ranch life. However, trouble was building up in Tombstone, and the OK Corral fight was on its way to its date in history. Slaughter did not associate much with the Earps, Doc Holliday or the Clantons. John Lavanchy, manager of the Slaughter Ranch Museum near Douglas, explained Slaughter's actions. "He was a family man," he said, and not interested in the Earp/Clanton feud. Those fighting factions left Slaughter alone too.


Slaughter, in the meantime, went on the offensive against the Apache Indians. The fierce Apaches had annihilated or pushed other smaller Indian tribes out of the Southwest and were concentrating on the Anglo and Mexican settlers on both sides of the border. Instead of sitting back waiting to be raided, Slaughter went after the Apaches with a deadly vengeance, tracking and killing any depredators he found. Soon, the Apaches were steering clear of the Slaughter ranch, leaving that "wicked little gringo" alone.

How did a small man with asthmatic lungs manage to do all this and stay alive?

Slaughter had absolutely no fear of being murdered. He would stand up to any outlaw, believing they could not kill him. The closest he came to being killed was a wing-shot on the ear. Slaughter firmly believed he was protected by a guardian angel, and that he had an inner voice that led him. He was a man of habit in many ways—always sitting at the head of the table, rising before dawn, smoking one cigar after another, but at times he would abruptly vary his routine. He would be still for a moment,

See Slaughter on page 14

TOMBSTONE



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Tasting Tombstone's History

by Sherry Monahan

By mid 1881, Tombstone was being touted as the liveliest and most promising mining town west of the Mississippi. The town, now an incorporated city, was well laid out with broad streets that offered easy access to all. In addition to the hotels, banks, stores, saloons, and a theater, there were newspapers, churches and schools. There were four newspapers in town that published the telegraphic and local news. They were, the *Epitaph*, *Nugget*, *Expositor*, and *Evening Gossip*.

The churches in Tombstone provided inspiration to those who chose to partake, and residents could choose from three different churches, which consisted of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Catholic. The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in May 1880, the Presbyterian Church began in September 1880, and the Church of the Sacred Heart (Roman Catholic) was organized in August 1880.

Once Tombstone had begun to grow and prosper, miners and businessmen alike began to bring their families to join them. Tombstone now had a large number of children which prompted the need for education. Tombstone parents had two schools to choose from, one public and one private. The public school had about 110 enrolled, and two teachers to supervise. The private school, The Tombstone Academy, was also well attended, and run by Professor J.B. Patch. The town's population was reported to be between 6000 and 7000. Tombstone's population was a hard number to pin down, mainly because of the transient nature of a mining community. The town itself was like a revolving door, with people continuously coming and going.

Tombstone's population could easily have been called the melting pot of Arizona. The nationalities of some of the town's residents consisted of Irish, German, English, Scotch, Canadian, Austrian, Russian, Italian, French, Belgium, Chinese, and Mexican. The influence of these various cultures could be seen throughout Tombstone, and many businesses were reflective of this. Food related businesses were the ones where the greatest influence could be seen. There were restaurants that served Irish, French, and Italian cuisine. The Grand Hotel's restaurant often served a combination of traditional continental cuisine, along with trendy French dishes. Some of their menu items included, Chicken Pot Pie, Trout a la Huile with olives, new potatoes, asparagus, and blackberry pie. Try making this old fashioned recipe for Blackberry pie and enjoy a taste of Tombstone:

BLACKBERRY PIE

3 c. fresh blackberries	2 T. lemon juice
1 c. sugar	1 T. butter, cut into pieces
2 T. flour	2 unbaked pie crusts

Combine the berries, sugar, flour, and lemon juice together in a large bowl. Gently toss the mixture to evenly coat the berries. Pour into a lined 9" pie pan, dot with butter, and cover with the second pie crust. Cut 3 or 4 holes in the crust to allow the steam to escape. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes, or until the berries are tender. Allow to cool 30 minutes before cutting. Serve with whipped cream and freshly grated nutmeg. ©

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then suddenly announce he was going in a different direction than he had previously stated. He might slow down his pace or speed up for no reason. Ben T. Traywick in his book, "That Wicked Little Gringo: Story of Tombstone's John Slaughter," quotes Slaughter as saying, "No man can kill me. I wasn't born to be killed. I cannot explain it, but I know it. When my time comes, I'll die in bed."

His self-prophecy proved right again and again. Why or how he got this revelation is a mystery. He was a typical Protestant of the era, prone to curse when ladies weren't around, throwing out the GD word frequently. It's obvious he wasn't a celibate. He was a compulsive gambler who could play cards 24 hours on end, promising his wife he would quit, and then go right back to it. He could not see a calf and not want to put his brand on it no matter whom it belonged to. His neighbors used to wryly joke that Slaughter's cows were a biological phenomena; they produced at least eight calves a year.

Regardless of why Slaughter was blessed with this knowledge, the good citizens of Arizona benefited from it, and the bad citizens cursed it, considering it more the work of the devil than of God.

After the Earps pulled out, the citizens of Tombstone, noting that the Apaches left Slaughter alone, asked him to be sheriff. In the years that Slaughter was sheriff of Cochise County, he tracked down hundreds of outlaws. While he hated vigilante justice, he wasn't above handing out his own quick brand of it. When a horse was reported stolen, Slaughter would leave town, come back with the horse, but people thought it best not to ask what happened to the thief. Nevertheless, the jail stayed full, and soon citizens nicknamed it "Hotel de Slaughter."

While the Earps and Doc Holliday had their brief—but brilliant—shot at Tombstone fame, Slaughter went quietly around with those deadly deep-set eyes cleaning out the bad elements in Southeastern Arizona, believing in divine intuition and a quick draw. People saw him not as a bad man, but as a dangerous man.

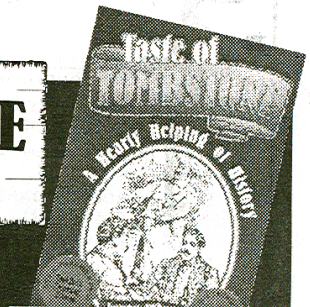
Eventually, Slaughter retired to his San Bernardino ranch where he lived happily with his wife and his natural and adopted children. As an old man, he stared down Pancho Villa and won. However tough he was, he couldn't stop the cruelty of old age. He suffered from severe eczema on his hands and feet. High blood pressure plagued him, and as his feebleness increased, he sometimes could not remember the names of the cards as he played his beloved poker. In 1922, he died naturally in his sleep at age 80, just as he had predicted.

The legend, however, lives on. Walt Disney Productions made a series of Texas John Slaughter programs in the late 50's and early 60's that can sometimes be found for sale over the Internet. The house at San Bernardino Ranch is now the John Slaughter Ranch Museum. See Janice's Day Trip this month to the Slaughter Ranch with all the information you'll need.

The ranch museum remains a reminder of an ordinary man who took the gift he felt he had been given and with it, did good for his fellow man in an extraordinary way—much to El Diablo's shame.



Taste of Tombstone is a brief history of Tombstone and its restaurants, bakeries, meat markets, and grocery stores - all of which contributed to the eating and dining experience. I have also included a collection of recipes so you can personally sample a Taste of



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