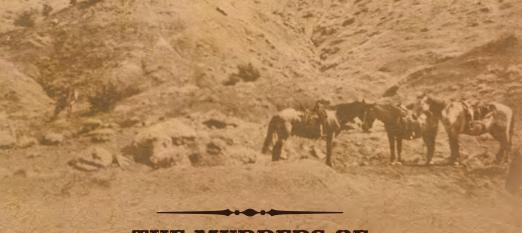
LIFE AND DEATH ON THE MORMON FRONTIER



THE MURDERS OF FRANK LESUEUR AND GUS GIBBONS BY THE WILD BUNCH

STEPHEN C. LESUEUR

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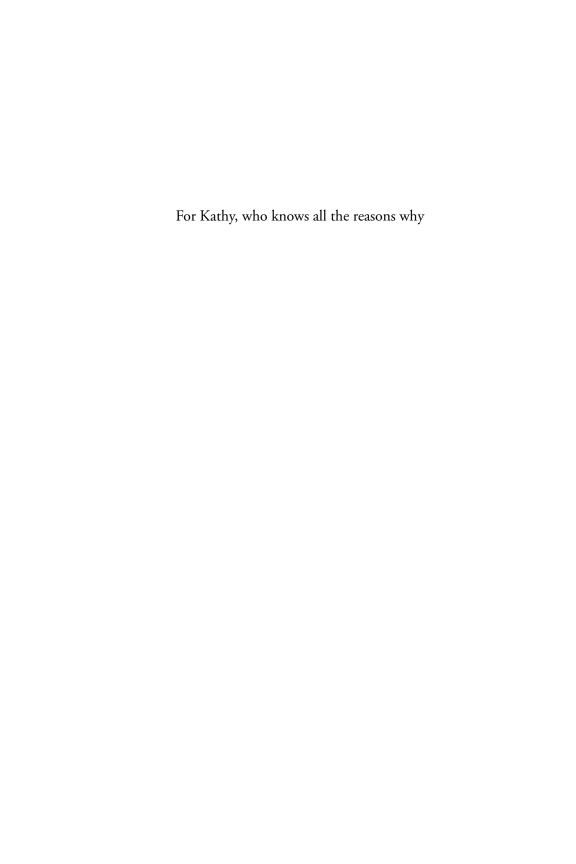
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INTRODUCTION

utlaws murdered my great-uncle, Frank LeSueur. Frank and another young man, Gus Gibbons, had been summoned to join a posse chasing suspected cattle rustlers. After a long day in the saddle, all the posse members returned home, except Frank and Gus. Their bodies were found the next day twenty miles outside of St. Johns, Arizona, a small town where the LeSueur and Gibbons families had settled with fellow Mormons. Frank had been shot five times, Gus six, their faces disfigured and blackened with gunpowder after being shot at close range while they lay on the ground, dead or dying. The year was 1900. I was born more than fifty years later in Burbank, a quiet Los Angeles suburb teeming with new housing tracts built for World War II veterans and their families. Frank's murder was well known to my family, but we knew little beyond these meager facts. My grandfather, Karl LeSueur, only five when his older brother was killed, recalled few details. To the best of our knowledge, Frank's death occasioned little notice or consequence. We believed the outlaws were never identified, nor was much effort made to capture them.

We were wrong. In recent decades, historians of outlaws and the West have become quite interested in this episode, largely because the killers were members of Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch gang. Although there remains room for disagreement regarding which gang members participated, the likely killers were Harvey Logan (alias Kid Curry), Thomas C. Hilliard (alias Tod Carver), Ben Kilpatrick, Will Carver, and Tom Capehart. We know that Butch Cassidy was not with them because, on the day that Frank and Gus were killed, Cassidy was sitting in the St. Johns's jail. The sheriff did not record his reasons for detaining Cassidy, but it appears he correctly suspected a connection between Cassidy and the murderers. Cassidy, whose real name was Robert LeRoy Parker, was also a Mormon whose parents emigrated to Utah in the 1850s. How a Mormon boy came to lead a murderous outlaw gang has fascinated and perplexed historians.

In writing about the Wild Bunch, historians have played up the drama of their daring heists and violent confrontations. Their victims serve primarily as extras in the outlaws' stories, bit players and forgotten names

whose lives merit little attention. After learning of the Wild Bunch's role in my uncle's murder, I decided to examine more closely the accounts left by the families of Frank LeSueur, Gus Gibbons, and other residents of the tight-knit Mormon community in St. Johns. They tell of the outlaws' menacing entrance into St. Johns and of their stopping at a store where Frank's father sold them bullets for their guns. They tell of the minor incident that triggered the call to arrest the outlaws, the subsequent organizing of the posse, the anxious waiting for the men to return, and the missteps that left Frank and Gus alone on the outlaws' trail. Their accounts also describe an aftermath filled with heartache, bitter second-guessing of the sheriff, and an aching desire to find meaning in the young men's deaths.

When writing about Western outlaws, historians must untangle the mythology that surrounds the bandit gangs and gunfighters who were romanticized even in their own time. When Kid Curry was arrested in Tennessee, hundreds of local citizens flocked to the Knoxville jail hoping to get a look at the infamous gunman. They willingly laid down their money when Curry jokingly suggested they pay "ten cents a peep" as they paraded by his cell. Many popular writers portray the outlaws as social bandits and "good badmen," champions of the little guy and symbols of an unsullied frontier making its last stand against encroaching industrialization. Modern popular culture perpetuates many of these themes. The 1969 movie "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" portrays the two outlaws as affable rogues. In this telling, Butch is as quick with his wit as Sundance is with a gun. Butch eschews violence and aims his larceny primarily at those whose wealth makes them deserving targets. The 1971 to 1973 television series "Alias Smith and Jones" tells the story of Kid Curry and Hannibal Heyes, two likeable young men who, regretting their criminal past, have gone straight and await a promised pardon from the governor. Heyes's smooth tongue and Curry's fast gun help them elude capture by bounty hunters and lawmen, while they use their cunning and violence to protect the vulnerable and innocent. These story lines are consistent with motifs that portray western outlaws as misunderstood and basically honorable men whose station or circumstances have led them to a life of crime. In the case of the Wild Bunch, regardless of what may have initially motivated their turn to crime, we can also add one more character description: the men who murdered Frank LeSueur and Gus Gibbons were stone-cold killers.

^{1.} Knoxville Journal and Tribune, December 17, 1901, 2.

Introduction

Still, outlaw myths die hard. Robert Redford, whose role as the Sundance Kid helped propel him to Hollywood stardom, suggested that many Western bandits were just "kids who never grew up or high spirited men whose sense of fun and pranks couldn't be contained by the law."2 In the movies, yes. But the outlaws' activities, viewed from the perspective of their murdered victims and families, cannot be characterized as playful hijinks. And contrary to outlaw lore, Cassidy and his gang were not necessarily great masterminds.3 Some of their heists betrayed less than stellar planning and execution. Not everyone got away. Cassidy was positively identified in each of his first two bank robberies. It's also possible Cassidy never actually robbed a train, though he may have helped gang members with the planning. And despite hauls totaling more than a hundred thousand dollars over several years, the outlaws constantly spent themselves broke gambling, whoring, and partying. Butch and Sundance famously interrupted that cycle for a few years when they took up ranching in Argentina, but they eventually returned to doing what they knew best. By all accounts, most Wild Bunch members were crack shots and feared gunmen, but as this history will show, their preferred method of confrontation was ambush. They were not looking for a fair fight; they had no qualms about shooting people in the back.

The LeSueur-Gibbons murders set off a chain of events with long-lasting impacts on both the outlaws and the Mormon families. In the near term, Apache County Sheriff Edward Beeler led posses across five Western states and territories and into Mexico to track down the outlaws, who continued their murderous spree as they fled. The search for the killers eventually sparked the largest manhunt in Utah up to that time. The murders would also spur Dick Gibbons, Gus's uncle, to run for the territorial legislature, where he became a leading proponent of creating a force of Arizona Rangers with the training and expertise to hunt down criminal gangs. During Beeler's chase after the killers, a much-harried Cassidy reportedly sought amnesty for his crimes from Utah Governor Heber Wells. "I want to quit this outlaw business and go straight," Cassidy told his attorney in one version of this story, adding, "I realize now that it's a losing

^{2.} Lula Parker Betenson and Dora Flack, *Butch Cassidy*, *My Brother*, xiii, in Forward by Robert Redford.

^{3.} See, for example, Daniel Buck and Anne Meadows, "The Wild Bunch: Wild, but not Much of a Bunch," 29–31; and Vince Garcia, "The Wilcox, Wyoming Train Robbery—As It Happened," 81.

game." The amnesty story is likely apocryphal. Nevertheless, Cassidy and Sundance departed for Argentina less than six months later, suggesting that the two men recognized the Wild Bunch's days were numbered.

Many Mormon families living in St. Johns, including both the LeSueur and Gibbons families, left extensive records of their lives in the form of letters, memoirs, and church and county records. A wealth of material is also found in Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico newspapers that covered the murders and search for the killers. As I delved into these records, I realized that the protagonists in this story are not just the outlaws and their immediate victims, but also the St. Johns community. The murders reverberated among the townspeople, altering the trajectory of many lives. Consequently, I broadened the scope of my research to present a clear picture of those affected when their lives intersected with the Wild Bunch. Their interwoven stories provide a new perspective of the Mormon colonizing experience, particularly of the challenges they faced in establishing settlements among the Gentiles (as non-Mormons were called).

Americans are generally familiar with the central role Mormons played in settling Utah, but they are less so with their pioneering efforts in Arizona. The colonizing missionaries sent by Brigham Young to settle St. Johns suffered extraordinary privation in the arid climate and inhospitable frontier environment. They also encountered determined, occasionally violent opposition from the town's existing residents—primarily Mexican-Americans—who saw themselves being pushed aside by the Mormon newcomers. For their part, the Saints wanted to live separately from their gentile neighbors, but survival in that unforgiving region required alliances, and alliances required collaboration and compromise. Both communities had to learn how to live together. Lawlessness along the Arizona frontier exacerbated these challenges. Even as late as 1900, outlaw bands plagued the Western states and territories, where the vast forest and mountain expanses offered safe refuge for murderers, rustlers, and thieves.

In writing about my ancestors, I have been forced to confront cherished family stories of faith and courage. Mythology does not attach itself solely to outlaw history. LeSueur family members recount Frank's murder as a faith-promoting tale. After Frank's death, his brother James reported having a vision in which he saw Frank preaching the Mormon gospel to other deceased spirits in the afterlife. Assisting Frank in this task was a young woman who, James understood, was to be Frank's wife. Shortly

^{4.} Charles Kelly, *The Outlaw Trail: A History of Butch Cassidy and His Wild Bunch*, 267.

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after James recounted his vision to his parents, a woman from a neighboring town told the LeSueur family that her daughter, Jennie Kempe, had recently passed away and on her deathbed asked to be married to Frank in a posthumous marriage ceremony. Upon seeing Jennie's photo, James proclaimed Jennie to be the girl he saw in his vision. The remarkable circumstances that brought together the LeSueur and Kempe families seemed not only to confirm the reality of James's vision, but also the truthfulness of Mormon beliefs regarding the hereafter. In this telling, the outlaws became mere footnotes in an inspirational story, a story James retold in Church publications and at family gatherings. But crucial aspects of James's story, like outlaw mythology, do not withstand scrutiny. The truth, though less miraculous, is no less compelling.

Various aspects of the Mormon settlement in St. Johns have been examined by William S. Abruzzi, Dam That River! Ecology and Mormon Settlement in the Little Colorado River Basin (1993); Daniel Justin Herman, Hell on the Range: A Story of Honor, Conscience, and the American West (2010); Charles S. Peterson, Take Up Your Mission: Mormon Colonizing Along the Little Colorado River 1870-1900 (1973); C. LeRoy and Mabel R. Wilhelm, A History of the St. Johns Arizona Stake: The Triumph of Man and His Religion Over the Perils of a Raw Frontier (1982); and Mark E. Miller, "St. Johns's Saints: Interethnic Conflict in Northeastern Arizona, 1880-85" (1997). These works are exemplary, but much information has become available since they were published, adding both color and insight into the Mormon colonizing experience. Historians have written extensively about Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch, most recently in Charles Leerhsen, Butch Cassidy: The True Story of an American Outlaw (2020). The LeSueur-Gibbons murders have not been overlooked, but neither have they received in-depth attention, except for the purpose of identifying the killers. Apache County Sheriff Beeler also deserves a critical look for his dogged pursuit of the outlaws, which may have helped persuade Cassidy and the Sundance Kid to relocate outside the United States. "Lesueur [sic] and Gibbons were my personal friends, and they lost their lives in a well-meant effort to assist me," Beeler told reporters, vowing to follow the outlaws into hell, if need be, to even up the score.⁵ Some townspeople blamed missteps by Beeler for the young mens' deaths, and the episode cast a dark shadow over his reputation. Looking at these events from both the outlaws' and victims' perspectives contributes sig-

^{5.} Salt Lake Herald, June 4, 1900, 2 (reprinted from the Grand Junction Sun); and Salt Lake Herald, June 13, 1900, 2.

nificantly to our understanding of the outlaws and Mormonism, as well as to the history of Arizona and the West.

William "Bill" Gibbons and John "J. T." LeSueur, the fathers of Gus and Frank, overcame many challenges to make a place for themselves and their families in St. Johns. Both would eventually hold office in the Apache County government and become respected leaders in their church. LeSueur also served in the territorial legislature, and by 1900 he was a leading member of the local business community. LeSueur and Gibbons owned extensive herds of sheep. Although deprivation and death were no strangers on the Arizona frontier, their sons' brutal murders shook the entire community, the act being so vicious and unnecessary, the young men so full of promise. The end of the outlaw era was fast approaching, but it did not come soon enough for Frank LeSueur and Gus Gibbons.

Note on the terms "Mormon" and "Zion"

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have long been known as "Mormons," a nickname that derives from their belief that the Book of Mormon is inspired scripture. Until recently, the Church used the term extensively in its literature and proselytizing materials, such as the "I'm a Mormon" campaign, though always emphasizing the actual name of the church. Today, the Church discourages the use of Mormon and prefers that its members be called Latter-day Saints rather than LDS or Mormons. The change highlights the Church's contention that it is Jesus Christ's true church and its doctrines and teachings represent the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Because my history examines an era when the term "Mormon" was commonly used by both members and non-members, I use the term throughout both to help portray this time period and provide ease of reading. I also use "Saints" interchangeably with "Mormons."

In biblical times, Zion referred to both the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel. For nineteenth-century Mormons, Zion represented their New Jerusalem, a place where they gathered in expectation of Christ's Second Coming. Joseph Smith initially identified Independence, Missouri, as the site of the Mormon's Zion, but persecution drove them to Illinois and eventually to Utah, which became their new Zion and place of gathering. Over time, the term "Zion" has taken on many meaning for the Saints, but early Saints were intent on building Zionic communities throughout the Mountain West as part of their effort to establish a righteous kingdom of God to usher in the Millennium.

CHAPTER 1

THE IINFOLDING OF GOD'S PLAN ACROSS ARIZONA

This story begins at the end of the world. The LeSueur and Gibbons families were driven to settle the American West by the same millennial spirit that inspired Butch Cassidy's grandparents to pull handcarts a thousand miles across swollen rivers and interminable prairies to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Like the tens of thousands of Mormons who gathered from North America and abroad, they sought a place of refuge their Zion—to escape the expected calamities and disasters of the fastapproaching end times. Only Zion and its faithful would be spared God's wrath. The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith had declared in 1835 that "fifty-six years should wind up the scene." Building on Smith's millennial timeline, Apostle (and future Church President) Wilford Woodruff later predicted that "there will be no United States in the Year 1890."2 Although these deadlines came and passed, the Church's faithful remained confident that Christ's Second Coming lay just round the corner, even if the precise timetable was unknown. Many Latter-day Saints, as they called themselves, fervently believed they or their children would live to see the Savior's return.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith. He claimed to be restoring the ancient Christian church and its original teachings, which according to him, had been corrupted and lost after the deaths of the apostles. In the same year, he published a new book of scripture, the Book of Mormon, which along with the Bible, testifies of Christ's life and mission. Members of the new church became known as "Mormons" because of their belief in the new scripture. As president and prophet, Smith issued revelations, ordained a set of modern apostles to help lead the Church, and began laying plans to build a New Jerusalem or Zion on the American continent. Through his apostles and a growing army of missionaries, Smith sent out the word that God

^{1.} Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2:182.

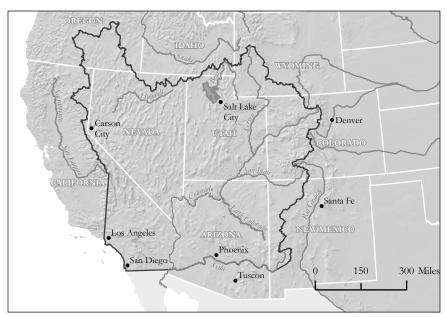
^{2.} Quoted in Charles S. Peterson, *Take Up Your Mission: Mormon Colonizing Along the Little Colorado River 1870–1900*, 228n18.

had restored His true church to earth and called for the faithful to gather together in Zion.

The Mormons didn't simply gather and wait. God's plan called for them to build a righteous kingdom of God to usher in Christ's triumphant return. The impetus for Mormon gathering was theological, but it had economic and political import as well. Once in Zion, the Saints intended to create a political entity that would not only prepare the way for Christ but also serve as the foundation for His millennial governance. Consequently, the Mormons established their own shadow government that would step in and assume power when the day of judgment arrived—and when earthly governments, including the United States, fell by the wayside. But until that time, Church leaders would have to facilitate the well-being of the multitude of converts flocking to Zion from all corners of the globe. A key tenant of Mormon theology also held that Native Americans, as the literal descendants of the Old Testament tribe of Joseph, would play a pivotal role in the unfolding events. From the Church's earliest days, the Mormons devoted enormous resources to proselytize and civilize Native Americans, whose highly anticipated conversion to Mormonism would herald Christ's return.

Following aborted attempts to establish communities in Missouri and Illinois, the Mormons made their headquarters in Salt Lake City in 1847. Utah and the West became their Zion. Brigham Young, Joseph Smith's successor, envisioned a kingdom-building enterprise that would spread far beyond the Great Salt Lake valley to encompass large portions of territory recently ceded to the United States by Mexico, as well as a portion of the Oregon Territory. In 1849, Mormon leaders petitioned the federal government to create a massive new state called Deseret. As drawn by the Mormons, Deseret would comprise two hundred thousand square miles, encompassing present-day Utah, nearly all Nevada and Arizona, about a third of California (including Los Angeles and San Diego), significant portions of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming, and smaller pieces of Idaho and Oregon.³ Ultimately, Mormon leaders wanted to establish a Mormon domain that also included Mexico and even South America. When Mormon families were called as colonizing missionaries to settle a particular region or town, their leaders expected them to remain until they were "honorably released" or, as often was the case, they were directed to colonize another frontier outpost. The efficient settling of the West

^{3.} Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 163.



Proposed State of Deseret 1849. Map by Abner Hardy, ThinkSpatial, BYU Geography.

became a theological imperative, a prerequisite for the Second Coming, a sign of God's unfolding plan for his people.⁴

Congress declined to create Deseret, eventually reducing the planned state to Utah's current boundaries. Still, Young's dream of a vast Mormon empire remained undiminished. With methodical intent, the Mormons spread in all directions from their Salt Lake City headquarters. Church leaders established a Perpetual Emigrating Fund to support the mass migration of converts seeking religious and economic salvation in the newly opened western territories. And the converted men, once settled with their families in Mormon settlements and towns, often returned as missionaries to their homelands, where they preached the good news of the true gospel's restoration, creating a perpetual cycle of converts and missionaries to nourish the growing kingdom. Within ten years after their arrival in Salt Lake City, the Mormons had established ninety-six settlements and towns in the West. By 1900, the number totaled at least five hundred.⁵ The LeSueur and Gibbons families would be called to serve among Arizona's vanguard.

^{4.} Peterson, Take Up Your Mission, vi.

^{5.} Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints 1830-1900*, 88.

The Mormons started exploring Arizona in 1854, but two decades would pass before serious colonizing began. The intense heat and limited water resources in the remote territory discouraged large-scale emigration, as did the presence of hostile native tribes, particularly the Apache and Navajo. Although Mexico had ceded its claims to this territory, the Indigenous people had not. Nevertheless, Mormon leaders kept an eye on Arizona, hoping eventually to establish a line of settlements extending into Mexico and to the Gulf of California. When US Army troops finally subdued the Navajo and Apache tribes sufficiently to force large numbers of them onto reservations—the Navajos in 1868 and Apaches in 1871—colonizing became much safer for white settlers. Tensions remained, as did occasional conflicts and deadly violence, but with the protection of the US Army, non-natives now had a free hand to appropriate for themselves the choice farm lands, grazing fields, and natural resources surrounding the reservations.

In December 1872, Brigham Young sent a scouting party under Bishop Lorenzo Roundy to explore Arizona's Little Colorado River corridor and other areas to locate possible settlement sites. Although Roundy found the Little Colorado region to be "an inhospitable and forbidding waste," this was not discouraging news. A harsh environment meant less competition for land and resources. "Good countries are not for us," said George Q. Cannon, one of Brigham Young's counselors. "The worst places in the land we can probably get, and we must develop them. If we were to find a good country how long would it be before the wicked would want it and seek to strip us of our possessions?" After a failed colonizing effort in 1873, the Mormons began establishing a series of towns and settlements along the Little Colorado River in 1876, including St. Joseph, Brigham City, Snowflake, and St. Johns.

When Mormon leaders identified St. Johns as a key location for their pathway into Mexico, it was already an established town named San Juan. Its residents were largely Catholic, Spanish-speaking people from New Mexico, many born as Mexican citizens before New Mexico was ceded to the United States. Built on rolling hills along the western bank of the

^{6.} Charles S. Peterson, "Arizona, Pioneer Settlements In," 1:66.

^{7.} Peterson, *Take Up Your Mission*, 7. For similar assessments by early Mormon colonists regarding the region's barren conditions, see Kevin H. Folkman, "'The Moste Desert Lukking Plase I Ever Saw, Amen!' The 'Failed' 1873 Arizona Mission to the Little Colorado River," 115–50.

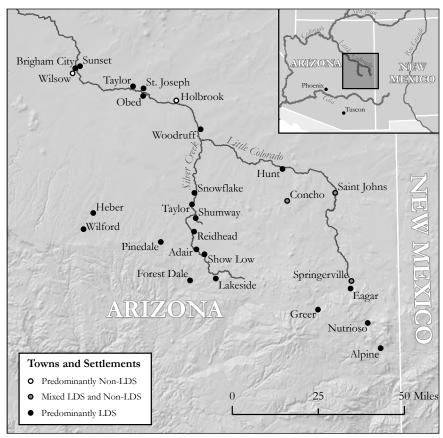
^{8.} Peterson, Take Up Your Mission, 9.

Little Colorado River, St. Johns stands at an elevation of nearly 5,700 feet in the White Mountains, high desert prairie that averages less than twelve inches of annual precipitation. Before the Saints' arrival, San Juan had an estimated population of about four hundred, including another two to three hundred in the surrounding villages, with an economy built on small-scale farming, cattle and sheep raising, and freighting supplies to Army encampments in New Mexico and Arizona.9 The Mormons wanted the entire townsite to themselves. "We would rather buy out the place if we could so as to make a Mormon town of it, and not be mixed with Jews, Mexicans and Gentiles," Apostle Wilford Woodruff wrote regarding Mormon intentions.¹⁰ Mormon leaders instructed Jesse N. Smith, President of the Eastern Arizona Stake, to purchase San Juan, all or in part, and make his home there. But during his visit to San Juan in January 1879, Smith was unimpressed, saying the "water was of very poor quality [and] the settlers seemed low in the scale of intelligence," and so he returned home to Snowflake without making the purchase.¹¹ Later in the year, Ammon Tenney negotiated a deal with brothers Solomon and Morris Barth to purchase "squatter's rights" to a large portion of the town's land, about 1,200 acres, including substantial water rights to the Little Colorado River. Eventually, the Mormons would pay the brothers 770 cows, 230 calves, and \$2,034.60 in cash for an estimated total price of

^{9.} The population estimate comes from the 1880 United States Census of the "Village of St. Johns," which was taken in June 1880, by Alfred Ruiz. St. Johns population was 546, including about thirty Mormon families numbering about 150. Most of these Mormons had moved to the area in early 1880 and were living in a section of St. Johns known as Salem. Some Mormon families known to be living in St. Johns at that time were not counted in the census. See also Mark E. Miller, "St. Johns's Saints: Interethnic Conflict in Northeastern Arizona, 1880–85," 72–73.

^{10.} Wilford Woodruff, letter to Brother [Ammon] Tenney, November 24, 1879. Woodruff wrote the letter under the name Lewis Allen, because he was hiding from prosecution for violating federal anti-polygamy laws.

^{11.} Jesse N. Smith, *Journal of Jesse Nathaniel Smith: The Life Story of a Mormon Pioneer 1834-1906*, 232 (January 22, 1879). A few years later when speaking at a St. Johns priesthood meeting, Smith said he thought "the blood of Cain was more predominant in these Mexicans than that of Israel." That is, he thought the St. Johns Mexican-Americans had African-American ancestry and, thus, were not entitled to hold the Mormon priesthood or fully participate in the religion (p. 288, May 6, 1884). This may have also influenced his decision not to purchase St. Johns land and settle there.



Early Mormon Towns and Settlements Along the Little Colorado River. Map by Abner Hardy, ThinkSpatial, BYU Geography.

\$14,734.60.¹² The Mormons kept the deal quiet so that speculators would not jump in and file homestead claims on the townsite before Mormon colonists arrived.

The LeSueur and Gibbons families—both large, extended families—were among the first Mormons to arrive in St. Johns. The LeSueurs in-

^{12.} St. Johns Land Records, 114, payment to Barth Brothers. The original bill of sale (November 18, 1879) called for payment of 750 cows, but the quick claim deed, which was written the same day (and signed the next), required payment of 770 cows and \$2,000 (C. LeRoy and Mabel R. Wilhelm, *A History of the St. Johns Arizona Stake: The Triumph of Man and His Religion Over the Perils of a Raw Frontier*, 33–36). According to the St. Johns ledger book, the additional 230 calves were paid as interest on the cows, and the additional \$34.60 was paid as interest on the \$2,000.

cluded brothers John (or "J. T.") and William and two of their sisters, Jane LeSueur Davis and Harriet LeSueur Warner, along with their spouses, children, and sixty-six-year-old mother, Caroline. The four families had immigrated together from Montpellier, Idaho, to Mesa in 1878, but they found the climate too hot for their liking. After fifteen months in Mesa, they packed up their wagons and headed east, looking to settle in either New Mexico or Colorado, or perhaps return to Idaho. However, hostile Native Americans prevented them from traveling any farther east than St. Johns, where they arrived in April 1880. While the LeSueur families were waiting to proceed, visiting leaders from Salt Lake City called them to remain as colonizing missionaries.

The undeveloped countryside surrounding St. Johns initially appeared to have great potential. Unusual rainfall during the past several years had created tablelands and valleys of waist-high grama grass, giving Apache County some of the best grazing pastures in all of Arizona. By 1884, nearly 90 percent of all sheep in Arizona would be raised in Apache. The region's mountains were well-timbered and filled with game. "With its vast deposits of coal, valuable forests of pine, extensive stock ranges and rich farming lands, Apache has all the natural advantages to build up a rich and populous community," wrote Arizona's commissioner of immigration, Patrick Hamilton, who also touted the "many beautiful, clear streams" flowing from the mountains during the spring snowmelt. 13

Hamilton's job was to promote immigration and economic growth, but with regard to Apache County, his boosterism contained more fantasy than truth.¹⁴ A case in point was the murky Little Colorado River, the main source of water for St. Johns and other Mormon settlements. John Blythe, sent to Arizona to colonize St. Joseph, said the river looked like "a running stream of mud."¹⁵ Another Mormon colonizer described one of the river's tributaries as so thick with red sand that it "looks almost like red

^{13.} Patrick Hamilton, *The Resources of Arizona. Its Mineral, Farming, Grazing and Timber Lands; Its History, Climate, Productions, Civil And Military Government, Pre-Historic Ruins, Early Missionaries, Indian Tribes, Pioneer Days, Etc., Etc.,* 95; and 287 (for sheepherding in Apache). See also David King Udall and Pearl Udall Nelson. *Arizona Pioneer Mormon: David King Udall his story and his family 1851-1938*, 71.

^{14.} William H. Lyon. "Live, Active Men, With Plenty of 'Push": Arizona's Territorial Immigration Commissioners," 149–52.

^{15.} John Blythe, "History of John A. Blythe," 6.

paint, mixed ready for use." ¹⁶ The Mormons diverted the Little Colorado for irrigation, but it contained so much sentiment that it sometimes damaged the crops. The river and its tributaries ran low in the summer but flooded after downpours, destroying dams and irrigation ditches. When the colonists expressed concern about the river's poor drinking quality, Apostle John Young proclaimed the water to be "wholesome" and promised it would be "palatable" if the Saints faithfully adhered to the Church's health code, called the Word of Wisdom.¹⁷

St. Johns residents found the water palatable, but barely. A St. Johns Stake history said the river water "was hardly fit for human consumption" and blamed the water for the typhoid and diphtheria epidemics that plagued the Mormon settlements. Rempe family members, who also arrived in 1880, recalled that "when it rained, it was mandatory to put out barrels, dishpans, tubs and buckets to catch the water as it ran off the roofs." It wasn't until the late 1880s that St. Johns resident Mark Hall discovered the McIntosh Spring in the hills about three or four miles east of town. Hall built a home over it and carried the fresh spring water into town three days each week in a large metal tank carried by a horse-drawn wagon, selling the water door to door for five cents per three-gallon bucket. St. Johns residents would rely on the delivery of fresh water via wagon until the town completed a pipeline to McIntosh Spring in 1911.²⁰

Water quality wasn't the only problem for Mormon colonists hoping to build a self-sustaining community. Good farmland was scarce. A comprehensive analysis of the climate and soil along the Little Colorado River basin found that the region's elevations above 6,000 feet did not offer reliable growing seasons, while those below 6,000 feet did not receive

^{16.} John Tate, "Journal of John W. Tate, October, 1880 to July, 1881," 40–41, (January 8, 1881).

^{17.} Daniel Justin Herman, *Hell on the Range: A Story of Honor, Conscience, and the American West*, 37. After a settler filled a seven-gallon kettle with water from the Little Colorado and allowed the sediment to settle, he found only an inch of water at the top.

^{18.} Wilhelm and Wilhelm, History of the Saint St. Johns Arizona Stake, 292.

^{19.} Ellen Greer Rees, "History of Christopher J. Kempe Family," 157.

^{20.} Wilhelm and Wilhelm, *History of the St. Johns Arizona Stake*, 292. Willamelia Smith said her family typically purchased fifteen cents worth of water (nine gallons) from Hall for their drinking and cooking needs, while they used the town's irrigation water (after letting the sediment settle) for washing. From Willamelia Coleman Smith, Interview, June 3, 1985.



St. Johns residents purchased fresh water for five cents a bucket brought in by wagon from a spring four miles away. A pipeline to the town was not completed until 1911. Courtesy Family History Center, St. Johns, Arizona.

sufficient precipitation to produce healthy crops.²¹ The thin alkaline soil also limited production. "As a farming country, St. Johns was a flop," said J. T. LeSueur's nephew, Warren Mallory. "The land was full of Salaratus [sic] and the water was full of minerals." When his family harvested their wheat, "it was hard to tell whether it was wheat or weeds," Mallory said. "We had to use it for mush and bread. It was so bitter, that we could hardly eat it." ²²

Mormon pioneer Evans Coleman echoed Mallory's assessment, stating that the St. Johns land was "so lacking in fertility one couldn't have raised a disturbance on it with a barrel of whiskey[,] ten Apache warriors and seventeen Texas cowboys. The land surrounding it was no better." Evans Coleman, "Saint Johns Purchase," 1.

^{21.} William S. Abruzzi, *Dam That River! Ecology and Mormon Settlement in the Little Colorado River Basin*, 84. Abruzzi's Chapter 4, "The Little Colorado River Basin," 79–120, provides a detailed examination of the topography, climate, soil, growing season, precipitation, and other environmental conditions in the Little Colorado region.

^{22. &}quot;The Remarkable Memoirs of Warren James Mallory (1868-1945): A Founding Pioneer of Mesa, Arizona, January 18, 1878," 22, 42. Warren Mallory was the son of Charles and Caroline LeSueur Mallory. Caroline, J.T.'s sister, died in Mesa in 1879. Charles moved the family to St. Johns in late 1880 or early 1881, thus joining the four LeSueur families already settled there.

The St. Johns Saints, especially in the early days, relied heavily on subsidies and food donations from other Mormon communities to survive.²³ The Mormons eventually planted orchards of fruit trees and grew wheat and other food staples. St. Johns became known for the beautiful poplar trees that lined its streets and served as wind breaks. They also built dams across the Little Colorado River and steered the water to irrigation ditches to water crops. Nevertheless, many farmers struggled for years, even decades, to scratch subsistence in a climate prone to early frosts, prolonged droughts and, when it did rain, destructive floods that destroyed dams and crops. Adding to these challenges, St. Johns and other towns suffered periodic grasshopper infestations that devastated crops. Numerous Mormon settlements along the Little Colorado failed in the early years. All seven of the Mormons' communitarian organizations, called United Orders, eventually disbanded. David K. Udall, the first Mormon bishop in St. Johns, said the region "proved to be a land of extremes, with alternating periods of drouths and floods, undependable seasons, and devastating spring winds."24

Despite their hardships, few colonizers doubted the inspired origin of their call to settle the region. If God had purpose in sending them to Arizona and making their work onerous, even cruel, that was His business. It was not theirs to question but to obey and learn, step by step, letting the refiner's fire shape them into more perfect Saints. The four LeSueur families decided to stay in St. Johns rather than continue their journey, because "a call from the Church was not to be ignored." 25

LeSueur and his brother, William, built their first home, which their two families shared, by digging a two-room shack into the side of a hill in Salem, the Mormon community located just north of St. Johns's center. They propped up the walls of their new home by setting cedar posts in the ground and filling in the cracks of their front wall with mud.²⁶ They made do with a dirt roof and floor. For beds, the LeSueurs drove small posts into the ground and wove willows across the posts for

^{23.} Joseph Fish, "History of the Eastern Arizona Stake of Zion and of the Establishment of the Snowflake Stake," 68; and Udall, *Arizona Pioneer Mormon*, 74.

^{24.} Udall, Arizona Pioneer Mormon, 71.

^{25. &}quot;History of John Davis and His Wife Jane Caroline LeSueur Davis," 3. This history is published in "John and Caroline LeSueur Family."

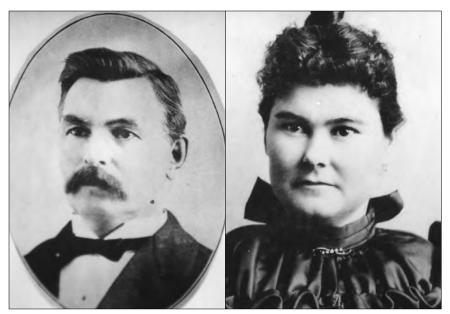
^{26.} Geneva Greer & Anona C. Heap, "John T. Lesueur [sic] and Geneva Castro [sic]," published in Esther Wiltbank and Zola Whiting, Lest Ye Forget, 170.

bedsprings. They would later abandon the dugout when Church leaders directed the Saints to settle on higher ground directly in St. Johns. These were young people: J. T. was twenty-seven years old and his wife, Geneva, twenty-two; William was twenty-three and his wife, Anner Mari, nineteen. Each family had one son, and Geneva was pregnant with another, whom they would name Frank. After getting their families settled, both J. T. and William took off for New Mexico to work on the Santa Fe Pacific Railroad, which was extending its line from Albuquerque to run through Arizona and into southern California. Working separately, they hauled freight, graded roads, sold goods at the railroad commissary, and took on any other work they could find. The construction of the railroad line was a godsend to Mormons throughout the Little Colorado corridor, providing them with needed cash to sustain their new towns and settlements. While the men were gone, Geneva and Anner Mari tended a vegetable garden and corn patch. Geneva made extra cash by knitting clothing for women and babies in St. Johns's Mexican-American community. J. T's mother, Caroline, also lived with the family and would stand guard, arming herself with an ax, when strangers came by the house. To cover the family's expenses while he was away, J. T. gave Geneva a package containing \$250, which she sewed into her bed tick for safe keeping.²⁷

- J. T. and William were gone much of the next two years. After the railroad advanced further into Arizona, they were able to work closer to home. When J. T. returned from his last freighting trip in New Mexico, Geneva spotted him as he crossed the valley, and so when he arrived at the shack, she had their two boys, James, four, and Frank, two, standing in front to greet him. J. T. brought \$400 in cash. After visiting with his wife, he asked how much remained of the money he had left her. Without answering, Geneva cut open the bed tick with her scissors, pulled out the package, and handed it to her husband. "It was just as I had left it, unopened with the full amount of money in it," J. T. said. "I then decided that if we did not make some success financially, it would not be her fault. . . . I felt that with such a wife I could not fail."
- J. T. invested his railroad earnings in the St. Johns Arizona Cooperative Mercantile Institution (ACMI), a Mormon joint-stock store that furnished employment, goods, and credit to local Mormons. He also began working

^{27. &}quot;Memoirs of John Taylor LeSueur," published in Don L. LeSueur, comp., LeSueur Family History: The Descendants of John T. LeSueur and William F. LeSueur (hereafter refenced as LeSueur Family History). J. T.'s memoir is dated June 1, 1938.

^{28. &}quot;Memoirs of John Taylor LeSueur."



After moving to St. Johns in 1880, John "J. T." and Geneva LeSueur lived for more than two years in a two-room dugout they shared with J. T.'s mother and his brother's family. Courtesy Family History Center, St. Johns, Arizona.

at the ACMI, starting out as a salesman and later rising to become the store's supervisor. Over the next fifteen years, he invested in other local businesses as well, often borrowing money to do so. J. T. bought out the St. Johns Drug Store and, with a group of investors, enlarged the operation as the St. Johns Drug Company. In partnership with Bishop Udall and others, he won a mail route contract serving the area. He also went into partnership with two friends to buy and develop a herd of sheep, which he managed with the help of his two oldest sons, James and Frank.

The LeSueur family lived modestly while waiting to see whether these investments would pay off. After J. T. finished working for the railroad, he moved his family from the Salem dugout to a small frame house in St. Johns, papering the walls with illustrated newspapers that provided insulation, decoration, and reading material for the children. Some of the newspapers were pasted upside down, and so James and Frank would stand on their heads to read them. ²⁹ The family made a kitchen table from a large dry goods box and used wooden canned-fruit boxes for chairs. J. T. claimed not to have any exceptional financial ability. "I was cautious in going in debt, only borrowing money when I felt sure I could make

^{29.} James Warren LeSueur, "Autobiographical Notes of My Life," 2.

beneficial use of it and could see my way clear to meet my obligation," he said. The said. The pages of his memoir is a man focused on achieving business success, a man who practiced the virtues of a striving capitalist and entrepreneur: "I am firmly of the opinion that in order to be financially successful, it is necessary to carry out in life all these fine grand principles—Industry, Frugality, Economy, Honesty and Temperance." The said of the said.

The call to settle St. Johns would be the last of many colonizing missions served by Bill Gibbons. Born in Kanesville, Iowa, in 1851, Bill was just fifteen years old when Church leaders called him to labor with his father among the Native Americans in St. Thomas, which was then part of Arizona but is now located in Nevada about sixty miles north of presentday Las Vegas. In the winter of 1873, he was called with his father and others to relieve fellow Mormons besieged by hostile Native Americans in Arizona. In the summer of 1874, Bill joined a force of Mormons stationed at Lee's Ferry to prevent hostilities between the Saints and Native Americans. He returned to his home in Glendale after being released in April 1875, but six months later he was called to work among the Hopi in Moenkopi, where he brought his wife and their three young children, including two-year-old Gus. An infant daughter died about a year after their arrival, but two more children would be born in Moenkopi. In the spring of 1878, Apostle Erastus Snow called Bill to do missionary work among the Spanish people in Ramah, New Mexico; Bill would return six months later to help build a woolen factory in Tuba for the Hopi. There he remained with his family until he was called to the St. Johns mission. Quickly able to pick up new languages, he could speak Spanish, as well as the languages of the Paiute, Navajo, Hopi, Ute, and Zuni people.³²

Whenever Bill was called away, his wife, Evaline Augusta Lamb, provided for the family. Called "Gusty" by her family, she raised corn, milked cows, sold butter, and tended a garden, along with whatever else was necessary to sustain the family. Gusty married Bill in 1871 when she was fifteen years old and he twenty. She had their first child less than a month after turning seventeen; their second child, Gus, at eighteen; and her six-

^{30. &}quot;Memoirs of John Taylor LeSueur."

^{31. &}quot;Memoirs of John Taylor LeSueur."

^{32.} This biographical information about William Gibbons is found in Andrew Jenson, *Latter-Day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:328–329; and Arvin Palmer, comp., *An Arizona Palmer Family History: Selected Sketches of Arthur Palmer and Evaline Augusta Gibbons Palmer and Their Ancestors*, 153.

teenth child, her last, at forty-six. "Sometime he [Bill] would be home two or three months then he would be gone longer than that," Gusty recalled of their early years. "I wonder some time since how we lived."³³ Still, it was a matter of pride with both Gusty and Bill that he never turned down a mission call, no matter how far away or how long he would be gone. "Some of the [Mormon] men would say, 'I will go if some one will look after my family," Gusty said. "But he wouldn't do that nor neither would I. I done every kind of work I could get to help things along."³⁴

The sacrifices made by the Gibbons family to assist and convert the Moenkopi Hopi reflected the unique place of Native Americans within Mormon theology. Along with the Bible, Mormons believe the Book of Mormon to be a sacred text. The Book of Mormon tells the story of an Israelite family led by God to the American continent in 600 BC. Upon arriving, the family split into two warring factions: the righteous Nephites who followed God's commandments; and the wicked Lamanites, whom God cursed with a dark skin as punishment for straying from His teachings. A thousand years of violent conflict followed. The Lamanites gained the upper hand whenever large numbers of Nephites fell into disbelief; however, Lamanites who repented of their wickedness and returned to God's teachings would see their skins miraculously—and literally—turn white after their conversion.³⁵ Eventually, the Nephites became as wicked as their Lamanite brothers, and so God allowed the Lamanites to overpower and destroy them. Nineteenth-century Mormons believed that the Indigenous Peoples of North, South, and Central America are the literal descendants of the Lamanites who had been cursed with dark skins. More significantly, they fervently believed that Native Americans throughout the

^{33.} Palmer, Arizona Palmer Family History, 130.

^{34.} Palmer, 130.

^{35.} Mormons no longer believe that the skins of Native Americans (Lamanites) will turn from dark to white after they embrace Mormonism, but this was not the case for most of the church's history. Even well into the twentieth century, Mormons widely believed and their leaders taught that Native Americans' skins would turn lighter if they converted and obeyed Mormonism's teachings. In the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon, the Church replaced the phrase "white and delightsome" with "pure and delightsome," based on a change Joseph Smith recommended in 1840. However, other Book of Mormon passages continue to state that God cursed the unbelieving Lamanites with a dark skin, a skin that became white again—"white like unto the Nephites"—after they reconverted. Mormons now interpret the curse and reported change in skin color to be metaphorical or symbolic, rather than literal.

American continents would enthusiastically embrace Mormonism—and become a "white and delightsome" people again—once their true origin as children of Israel was revealed to them through the Book of Mormon. From the Church's earliest days, Mormon leaders sent missionaries to proselytize among Native Americans. Like their Protestant counterparts, the Mormons hoped not to just convert the Lamanites, but also to civilize and turn them into productive farmers and citizens. Mormons expected to succeed where Protestant missionaries had failed, because the Book of Mormon would awaken the Lamanites to their true heritage and destiny. The expected mass conversion of the Lamanite descendants represented one of the signs of the last days.

The Mormons were neither reckless nor naïve when dealing with the Lamanites. Similar to predominant white American sentiments toward Native Americans, the Mormons regarded the Lamanites as savages mercurial, wild, and prone to thievery and violence. Although Brigham Young famously suggested that it was better to feed Native Americans than fight them, his commitment to peaceful accommodation was not limitless. After just three years in the Utah Territory, Young asked the US government to remove Native Americans from the territory. "We would have taught them to plow & sow, and reap and thresh, but they prefer idleness and theft," Young said.³⁶ Mormon leaders also tempered expectations of an immediate conversion of Lamanites. Young told Mormon colonists in Utah Valley that the "older Indians would never enter into the New and Everlasting Covenant but that they would die and be damned."37 In Utah, repeated episodes of conflict and violence were the inevitable result of the competition between Mormons and Native Americans for land and resources.

Nevertheless, the Mormons never completely abandoned their millennial hope to convert and elevate the Lamanites. When the Saints began moving into Arizona in 1876, Young expressed great optimism regarding the redeeming influence the Saints would have upon Arizona's Lamanite tribes. In a July 15, 1876, letter to Mormon leaders in Arizona, the Mormon prophet wrote:

We desire that the settlements in the Little Colorado be built up to the Lord in righteousness, wherein an example will be set to the surrounding tribes of Lamanites. . . . Treat them with kindness . . . set a proper example. . . .

^{36.} Eugene E. Campbell, Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West, 1847-1869, 103.

^{37.} Campbell, 100.

Instruct them in the Gospel. . . . Teach them to live in peace, become free from native vices and become useful citizens in the Kingdom. 38

Many Arizona Saints shared their prophet's optimism. They interpreted the ancient canal networks, petrographs, and other ruins left by Native Americans as evidence that sophisticated Nephite civilizations had once lived in this region. The Hopi tribe, considered by Young to be of "Nephite blood," seemed a promising prospect for conversion. ³⁹ As late as 1893, the Mormon prophet Wilford Woodruff told a gathering of Saints that he had seen a vision of thousands of Lamanites entering the temple. "They took charge of the temple and could do as much ordinance work in an hour as the other brethren could do in a day," Woodruff said. ⁴⁰

The Mormons were well-intentioned. Their missionaries tried to help Arizona's Indigenous people learn useful trades and skills, and they acted as advocates when government promises fell short and mediated disputes with white settlers. But the assistance the Mormons offered—to become Mormons and, essentially, adopt white man's ways—was not assistance Native Americans wanted. It meant abandoning their identity and culture. Mormons who settled St. Johns and the Little Colorado River corridor never questioned government policies that subjugated Arizona's Indigenous people and forced them onto reservations, nor did they question their right to colonize land once populated by Native American nations. The Mormons saw their divine destiny as kingdom builders across the American West. The Native Americans' destiny was to convert to Mormonism. But visions such as Apostle Woodruff's never came to fruition. Only a few hundred Lamanites would be baptized in Arizona. None of them really became part of the Mormon communities or abandoned their native practices and culture.⁴¹

Despite their lack of proselytizing success, the Lamanite missionaries still contributed to Mormon kingdom building in one important way: they facilitated colonization of the Little Colorado corridor by helping to reduce violence between Mormon settlers and Native American tribes

^{38.} Peterson, Take up Your Mission, 215.

^{39.} Barry A. Joyce, "The Temple and the Rock: James W. Lesueur and the Synchronization of Sacred Space in the American Southwest," 134. Joyce says that as late as the 1950s, Mesa school children were taught that the regions first settlers "saw in the Salt River Valley many evidences of the truth of the Book of Mormon, covering the passage northward of the Nephites of old" (136, n. 10).

^{40.} Quoted in Jesse N. Smith, Journal, 393 (April 8, 1893).

^{41.} Peterson, Take up Your Mission, 216.

who had been pushed off their lands.⁴² Men like Bill Gibbons developed trusted relationships with local tribes and acted as interpreters who could bridge the language and cultural gap between the Mormons and their Native American neighbors. They helped both sides avoid misunderstandings and intervened to settle disagreements peacefully, creating goodwill that reduced opposition to the Mormons' migration onto traditional tribal lands. Bill's daughter Rhoda Ann, who was born in Moenkopi while her father served there as a missionary, said the Hopi people were visibly upset when the Gibbons family was called to leave Moenkopi and colonize St. Johns. "Mother and Father said the day they loaded up the wagon and were ready to leave, the Hopi came to tell them goodbye and that some of them leaned up against the wagon wheels crying. They didn't want to see them go," she wrote.⁴³

Bill Gibbons quickly became a leader within the Mormon's St. Johns community, winning the admiration and friendship of Bishop David K. Udall. Both Udall, age 29, and Gibbons, age 30, had young wives and growing families; both worked unceasingly for the Church, often sacrificing their own well-being to serve the needs of fellow Mormons. Udall selected Gibbons to be one of his two counselors in the bishopric, and in 1887, when Church leaders selected Udall to lead the newly created St. Johns Stake, Udall again chose Gibbons as a counselor. "William H. Gibbons was a zealous, fearless man and understood our Mexican neighbors better than anyone else in our community for he knew their habits and spoke their language fluently. He was town constable and usually carried a six-shooter in his hip pocket, though he never had to use it," Udall said.⁴⁴

During Gibbons's stint as constable, a Mexican-American boy was arrested for murder and placed in the St. Johns jail.⁴⁵ One night, Gibbons heard that a mob of white men intended to storm the jail and lynch the boy. He went to the jailhouse, placed his six-shooter across his knees, and waited calmly in the dark with the door unlocked. Fluent in Spanish, he likely offered reassuring company to his young prisoner. Before long, the mob threw open the door, lanterns burning, and started yelling the boy's name. "Stand back," Gibbons shouted. Startled, the mob leader said, "My

^{42.} Peterson, 216.

^{43.} Palmer, Arizona Palmer Family History, 139.

^{44.} Udall, Arizona Pioneer Mormon, 95.

^{45.} Gibbons's daughter, Evaline, describes this incident in two different accounts in Palmer, *Arizona Palmer Family History*, 156, 240.

God, Mr. Bill, I didn't know you were here. Let us have the boy and we will do you no harm."

Gibbons held his ground. "Don't take a step closer or I'll kill the first man that does," he said. The mob backed out, and at the subsequent trial, a jury found the boy innocent.

The Mormons also elected Gibbons as water master to oversee the construction of irrigation ditches that would tap into the Little Colorado River and provide water to St. Johns homes, fields, and gardens. ⁴⁶ Once the channels were in place, he monitored water usage to ensure that townspeople took only their allotted share. This was no easy task. As Arizona pioneer Joseph Fish noted, the scarcity of water in St. Johns "caused litigation and local strife." People were assigned narrow windows of time for using the water, sometimes taking their "turns" in the middle of the night, and many were tempted to take more than their share when they thought no one was watching. Gibbons often had to apply the skills he honed as a mediator in disputes between Native Americans and Mormons to settle disagreements about water use. "Many times in the night he would be called to go along the city ditch and stop the Mexicans or the Whites from stealing water," one of his daughters recalled. ⁴⁹

Through their industry and thrift, Bill and Gusty were building a foundation for economic security when, on August 15, 1888, Bill got a hand caught in the blades of the town's threshing machine. The threshing machine of the 1880s was a noisy, complex, labor-saving device weighing over 2,000 pounds and consisting of wheels, belts, sharp blades, and shaking equipment that removed the husks and chaff as grain moved through the machine. The belts were powered by horses walking on a conveyer belt. Communities and towns often owned a thresher jointly and shared its use due to its expense. Bill felt apprehensive when it was his turn to feed grain into the thresher, as did his wife, Gusty, who was more than

^{46.} Udall, Arizona Pioneer Mormon, 84-85.

^{47.} Fish, "History of the Eastern Arizona Stake," 66.

^{48.} Warren Mallory recalled, "Water for irrigation was scarce and of very poor quality. We would take the water in turns of a very few hours each. These turns would come at all hours of day and night, and many were the times we got up at 12, or 2, or 3 o'clock in the night to take care of this little bit of water" ("Remarkable Memoirs of Warren James Mallory," 42).

^{49.} Palmer, Arizona Palmer Family History, 155.

^{50.} Details of the accident are provided by two of Bill's daughters, Rhoda and Eva, in Palmer, *Arizona Palmer Family History*, 141–42, 155–56, 183–84.

eight months pregnant and haunted by dark dreams and premonitions. She asked him not to do it, but Bill felt it was his responsibility, given that they would be working on a stack of grain at their house. "I'll have to go as they are expecting me," he said.

Shortly after Bill began feeding grain into the thresher, his left hand got caught in the blades and the machine started pulling him in. Two men standing nearby grabbed him around the waist and held on while someone ran to stop the horses. On the other end of the thresher, Will Gibbons, Bill's oldest son, saw his father's bloody glove come through and knew at once something was wrong. He ran around the thresher to find his father sitting on the ground as the other the men desperately tied cloths around his hand to stop the bleeding. The blades had completely mangled Bill's hand all the way to his wrist.

Because Bill's wife was pregnant, the men carried him to his father's house and called for a doctor to amputate the hand. Bill was pale and suffering, having lost a lot of blood, when the Mormon elders administered a healing blessing that evening. The doctor, who was not a Mormon, arrived just as the elders were giving the blessing. Seeing what he regarded as superstition, the doctor turned around and stormed out of the house. As he mounted his horse to leave, one of Bill's friends, also a non-Mormon, tried to get the doctor to return, but he refused. "If they want their Mormon doctors they can have them," the doctor said. Bill's friend angrily pulled the man from his horse and ordered him back into the house. The doctor gave Bill a swig of whiskey to kill the pain, took a large swallow himself, and amputated the hand. Gusty stayed at her in-laws' house so she could care for Bill while he recovered. Two weeks later, she gave birth to a baby girl. Bill insisted that they name her Evaline after her mother.

While Bill convalesced, the family buried the amputated hand, placing it in a padded box with the fingers slighted curled at the second joint, giving it a relaxed look. But sometime afterward, Bill complained of pain in his missing hand, a common phenomenon known as "phantom pain," which occurs in amputated limbs. At Bill's direction, "the box was dug up and the fingers straightened out for the hand to lie flat, as he wanted it to be," his daughter, Rhoda, said. "After this was done his hand he had lost no longer hurt him."

^{51.} The 1880 census lists just one physician living in St. Johns: Benjamin Blake, a twenty-five-year-old man from West Virginia. Whether Blake is the physician is unknown.



Bill and Gusty Gibbons initially struggled but eventually gained a firm financial foothold in St. Johns. In this circa 1893 photograph are (left to right): *Back:* Loman, Rhoda, Will, Gus; *Middle:* Bill, James, Gusty, David; *Front:* Eva, Ione, Junius, John, and Edward. Courtesy Jeanette Hancock.

The Gibbons family struggled in those early years. Gusty sometimes wouldn't eat at mealtime, pretending she wasn't hungry, so there would be enough food for her children. "We came here [St. Johns] and went through some pretty hard times for the want of something to eat and wear," she recalled. 52

In laboring to establish a viable community in St. Johns, the Gibbons, LeSueurs, and other Mormon families faced not only a hostile desert environment but also implacable opposition from their Mexican-American and non-Mormon white neighbors. The Mormons had purchased the entire west section of St. Johns, along with water rights to the Little Colorado River, from Solomon "Sol" and Morris Barth, German Jews who had married into the Mexican-American community. After emigrating to the United States, Sol worked as a stockman, trader, and freighter providing

^{52.} Palmer, Arizona Palmer Family History, 130.

grain to the US army in New Mexico and Arizona. He eventually led a group of New Mexican families to the Little Colorado River and established San Juan, where he became the town's leading citizen, owning a mercantile store, freighting business, and hotel, as well as farmland and an extensive herd of sheep. San Juan's name was later anglicized to St. Johns.⁵³

Sol and Morris Barth took advantage of the Mexican-Americans' custom of holding their land in common without formal title to the land. The two brothers quietly laid claim themselves to the St. Johns townsite and then sold a large portion of the planned town to the Mormons.⁵⁴ To avoid competition with speculators, the Mormons did not publicize their purchase or planned move into St. Johns. Neither did the Barth Brothers, perhaps because their rights to the town's land and river water were highly questionable. It would take years to settle the legal disputes arising from the sale. The town's Mexican-American residents raised no objections when the LeSueurs and other Mormon families settled north of St. Johns in Salem, but they immediately protested when Bishop David Udall arrived in October 1880 and began laying out town lots on the Mormon land adjacent to the established village.⁵⁵ The Mexican-Americans had intended to expand their community into the area of town purchased by the Mormons, but now they lay trapped between the Mormons on the west and the river on the east, giving them no room for growth. 56 The burgeoning Mormon population of farmers and ranchers would also siphon away precious water resources and increase competition for grazing land, potentially threatening the livelihoods of the Mexican-Americans.

A few days after Udall began surveying the Mormon town lots, he received a letter signed by thirty Mexican-American citizens demanding

^{53.} In justifying the change from San Juan to St. Johns, local postmaster Ebenezer Stover reportedly said, "It is time those Mexicans found out they are living in the United States." Miller, "St. Johns's Saints," 73. Stover would become a member of the anti-Mormon faction.

^{54.} Miller, 74.

^{55.} Udall, *Arizona Pioneer Mormon*, 70–71, said that when he arrived in St. Johns in October 1880, the St. Johns Ward consisted of about fifty Mormon families living in Salem and encompassing the Meadows (ten miles north), Walnut Grove (twenty miles south), and Cebolla, near Ramah, New Mexico.

^{56.} As many as seventeen Spanish-speaking families were already living in the new Mormon section, but, under the terms of the sale, they were allowed to stay. See Wilhelm and Wilhelm, *History of the St. Johns Arizona Stake*, 35; and Tom Beal, "St. Johns hardships legion, but Mormons stood firm," *Arizona Daily Star*, September 18, 2011, 1, 7.

that he stop. The Mormon colonizers would cause "entire and complete damage to our town and the Mexican population," they said.⁵⁷ The existing residents wanted to avoid "difficulties and consequences," but threatened to "place all the means in our power and within our reach to impede the establishment of the Mormons in the surroundings of this town."⁵⁸

The Mormons soon recognized that their neighbors had good reason to be aggrieved. "They looked upon us as enemies, who had come to encroach upon their old 'San Juan' settled by them in 1873," Udall said. "The Mexicans resented us and we did not blame them very much. Their 'squatters' rights' had not been properly respected by those who sold the land to our people." ⁵⁹

Still, the Mormons had no intention of leaving. After receiving the call to colonize St. Johns, they had sold their farms, homes, livestock, and other possessions to raise money for the wagons, teams, and provisions needed to immigrate, often traveling hundreds of miles across rugged mountains and desert wastelands. The Church had already made a significant down payment on St. Johns, with a final installment due soon. Mormon leaders regarded St. Johns as a key outpost in the expanding Mormon kingdom. Except in extraordinary circumstances, Mormons would not abandon their colonizing mission. The calls as colonizing missionaries "were as binding as calls to foreign missions and they were not free to leave until released," wrote Evans Coleman, whose family was called to settle the Apache County town of Alpine. 61

More than a little irony attaches to the attitudes of the Mormons and Mexican-Americans. Each wanted the town for themselves; each regarded the other as an undesirable neighbor. The Mexican-Americans, who viewed the Mormons as blindly obedient fanatics, joined with the Anglos to deny funding for Mormon public schools and exclude Mormons from teaching

^{57.} Marcus Baca et al. to D. K. Udall, October 26, 1880, in Udall, *Arizona Pioneer Mormon*, 78.

^{58.} Udall, 79.

^{59.} Udall, 77.

^{60.} The St. Johns Saints would eventually repay church headquarters for the money paid to the Barth brothers.

^{61.} Evans Coleman to Dear Dave, May 2, 1946. Coleman said his father, who was the Alpine bishop, eventually asked for and received an official release from the Mormon prophet, Lorenzo Snow, allowing the family to move from Apache County.

positions due to their illegal practice of polygamy. 62 Many Mormons considered the old San Juan community of whites and Mexican-Americans to be of "the worst element" and "low filthy habits," as well as "low in the scale of intelligence."63 Although it would be wrong to say the Mormons harbored no prejudices against people of Mexican descent, their initial desire to buy out the entire Mexican-American community derived primarily from their desire to live, as much as possible, separately from the corrupting influence of the outside world. They established their own cooperative businesses, often traded only among themselves, and voted as a bloc to protect their interests and increase their power. Mormons did not want to live among "Gentiles" of any ethnic group or race, including whites. The Mexican-Americans could also be insular, with a desire to maintain their own religious and cultural practices in the face of an encroaching American culture. Their wariness of living among the Mormons is understandable. Not only were the Mormons hemming them in against the river, but the Mormons' large numbers and clannishness threatened to marginalize the Mexican-American community, both politically and economically. Subsequent actions by both groups exacerbated rather than relieved tensions.

Although it was the Barth brothers who deceived the Mexican-American people by secretly selling the entire west side of St. Johns, the Mexican-Americans directed their anger at the Mormon newcomers. Sol Barth, after inviting the Mormons to settle in St. Johns, also turned against them. Barth and other local businessmen had anticipated brisk sales and burgeoning profits when the newcomers arrived, but they quickly saw that the Mormons' growing numbers would threaten their own economic and political interests. Not only did the St. Johns Saints establish jointly held businesses—including the ACMI mercantile store, a flour mill, and a stock raising company—but they primarily patronized their own stores, making non-Mormon business owners feel as if they were competing against the corporate Church. To counter the Mormon influence, Barth helped lead a

^{62.} Jed Woodworth, "Public Schooling in Territorial Arizona: Republicanism, Protestantism, and Assimilation," 116. In St. Johns, local authorities made the teacher qualifying exams intentionally impossible for Mormon applicants to pass.

^{63.} Fish, "History of the Eastern Arizona Stake," 62, 67; and Jesse N. Smith, *Journal*, 232 (January 22, 1879).

coalition of Apache County's non-Mormon and Mexican-American citizens that controlled local political offices and the courts through the mid-1880s.⁶⁴

The Mormons contended that their chief opponents—known as the St. Johns Ring—held a firm grip on power through rampant fraud and corruption. The St. Johns Ring also used that power to bring nuisance lawsuits and issue judgments against the Mormons. Sol Barth often served as foreman on grand juries that indicted Mormons for such crimes as unlawful assembly, larceny, and perjury. In 1884, Mormon opponents founded the St. Johns *Apache Chief* under publisher George McCarter, who called for the violent expulsion of the Saints. How did Missouri and Illinois get rid of the Mormons? By the use of the shot gun and the rope, McCarter wrote in May 1884, adding, In a year from now the Mormons will have the power here and the Gentiles had better leave. Don't let them get it. Desperate diseases need desperate remedies. The Mormon disease is a desperate one and the rope and shot gun is the only cure."

The anti-Mormon fervor in Apache County flourished amid broader efforts, primarily led by the Republican Party, to diminish Mormon political influence and root out polygamy in the Western territories.⁶⁷ In an 1884 Independence Day speech, Arizona Chief Justice Sumner Howard warned that the growing Mormon population threatened to put Arizona "under the vicious influence of a political polygamous priesthood at Salt Lake City."⁶⁸ At the same time, Arizona Governor F. A. Tritle called for a crackdown on Mormon polygamists; territorial lawmakers obliged by passing legislation that required Mormon voters to disavow belief in polygamy.⁶⁹ Antagonisms boiled over in 1885 when Arizona authorities convicted five polygamists of violating the territory's anti-bigamy laws and sentenced three of the men to four years of imprisonment in the Detroit

^{64.} Miller, "St. Johns's Saints," 66–99, provides a detailed examination of the early conflict between the St. Johns Mormons and their neighbors. See also, Scott E. Fritz, "Merchants of St. Johns, 1876-1885: A Study in Group Formation, Bigoted Rhetoric, and Economic Competition." The list of jointly held Mormon businesses in St. Johns comes from Fish, "History of the Eastern Arizona Stake," 66.

^{65.} Miller, "St. Johns's Saints," 83-84.

^{66.} Apache Chief, May 30, 1884, quoted in Peterson, Take Up Your Mission, 229.

^{67.} Edward Leo Lyman, "Elimination of the Mormon Issue from Arizona Politics, 1889-1894," 205–28; and JoAnn W. Bair and Richard L. Jensen, "Prosecution of the Mormons in Arizona Territory in the 1880s," 25–46.

^{68.} Apache Chief, July 18, 1884, quoted in Peterson, Take Up Your Mission, 230.

^{69.} Lyman, "Elimination of the Mormon Issue in Arizona Politics," 207-8.

House of Correction. Mormon Bishop David Udall had been one of the chief targets of the prosecution, but he escaped conviction because his second wife went into hiding and could not be found to testify against him. Udall's opponents next charged him with perjury in an unrelated case, using trumped up evidence to secure conviction. Udall received a three-year sentence to be served in the Detroit House of Correction, where he arrived September 2, 1885, handcuffed to a convicted counterfeiter.

After helping orchestrate Udall's conviction, the St. Johns Ring began losing its influence within Apache County. The honorable bishop's prosecution won him sympathy even from many of the Mormons' enemies, who believed they had gone too far with their manufactured charges.⁷⁰ Several Ring leaders, including John Lorenzo Hubbell, Charles Gutterson, and Alfred Ruiz, sent letters to Democratic President Grover Cleveland requesting a pardon for Udall. The Mormon bishop served less than four months in the Detroit prison before he and the imprisoned polygamists received pardons from President Cleveland, allowing the men to return to their Arizona homes. Meanwhile, members of the Ring got caught up in their own scandals. In 1887, Solomon Barth was convicted of destroying county records and forging county warrants.⁷¹ He was sentenced to ten years in the Yuma prison, though he was pardoned after serving two years. That same year, Francisco Baca was convicted of embezzling more than \$11,000 while serving as Apache County deputy treasurer; and in a civil and criminal case, Nathan Barth was fined \$500 and ordered to pay Morris Barth's widow \$9,000 as part of a settlement in which he also agreed to leave the territory.⁷² Mormon relations with their neighbors, including the Mexican-American community, gradually improved as Sol Barth, Hubbell, and other ringleaders began accepting the reality of the Mormon presence in St. Johns.

The breakup of the St. Johns Ring opened economic and political opportunities for many Mormon colonizers. The Gibbons family encountered tough times after Bill lost his hand in the thresher, but their fortunes improved when he was elected county treasurer in 1891 and

^{70.} Peterson, Take Up Your Mission, 237; and Miller, "St. Johns's Saint," 97.

^{71.} The county warrants were essentially checks or promises to pay, which the county issued when cash was short. Barth was accused of fraudulently increasing the of value warrants, such as taking a \$90 warrant and changing it to \$190 (by adding a one) and depositing the "raised" warrant in his bank account.

^{72.} St. Johns Herald, September 22, 1887, 3.

again in 1893. He also served on the Apache County Board of Supervisors in 1895 and 1897. It probably helped that the two oldest Gibbons boys, Will and Gus, who turned eighteen and sixteen years old in 1890, were old enough to contribute to the family's livelihood. Like other families, the Gibbons maintained a garden and fruit orchard on their town lot.⁷³ Bill also purchased a herd of sheep and operated a ranch west of Springerville, which steadied the family income and provided work for Gusty and their children, who spent the summers at the ranch tending sheep and spinning yarn from the wool.⁷⁴

J. T. LeSueur probably benefited the most from the improving relations. In October 1886, Apache County's Citizen's Ticket nominated him for treasurer as part of an effort to clean up the county's finances that had been plagued by fraud and theft. Not only had cash gone missing in prior years, but the county's finances were in such disarray that its warrants—that is, its promises to pay—were getting only sixty-five cents on the dollar. In touting LeSueur's candidacy, the *St. Johns Herald* praised "his modest worth, honorable record and stirling [*sic*] business qualifications." LeSueur received 65 percent of the 902 votes cast to win the 1887–1888 term as Apache County treasurer. "There never was any trouble about county moneys or accounts being well kept with him [LeSueur] in there," said George Crosby, who later served as the county's district attorney and worked closely with LeSueur in both church and government settings."

After serving a two-year term as county treasurer, J. T. was elected Judge of the Superior Court and then Democratic representative to the territorial legislature. After that, he never again ran for office in Apache County, joking that he didn't want to jeopardize his winning streak. Still, LeSueur continued to wield considerable influence. His fellow citizens called upon him to lead numerous government, business, and commu-

^{73.} St. Johns Herald, September 13, 1888, 3, praised the flavorful taste of peaches from Gibbons's St. Johns orchard.

^{74.} In July 1900, Gibbons owned 250 sheep and fifteen acres of land in Eagar, according to the minutes of the Apache County Board of Supervisors, July 9, 1900, 89.

^{75.} St. Johns Herald, October 21, 1886, 1.

^{76.} St. Johns Herald, November 18, 1886, 3.

^{77.} George H. Crosby, Jr., "As My Memory Recalls: Stories of the Colonizing of the Little Colorado River Country," 43. This reminiscence is a collection of newspaper columns that Crosby wrote for local newspapers and compiled by his daughter, Laprele Crosby Nunnery.



John "J. T." and Geneva LeSueur invested in numerous business projects to provide for their nine children. Two more boys would follow. In this c. 1897 photograph are (left to right) *Back:* Frank, Ray, Alice, James; *Front:* Nelle, Paul, Geneva, John, Karl, Charley, Leo. Photograph in author's possession.

nity projects, and he served as a Mormon Stake High Councilman from 1887 to 1900. "As long as he stayed in Apache County he was a power in local politics, by odds the strongest man in the Democratic party—closemouthed, clear-headed and with lots of influence, and never flying off on a tangent," Crosby said.⁷⁸

LeSueur enjoyed even greater success in business, where he saw many of his earlier investments pay off handsomely. These included a thriving sheep business, mail routes, a drug store, and the Mormon's ACMI cooperative store, where he held dividend-paying stock and rose to become the store's supervisor. In 1897, after the weekly *St. Johns Herald* (formerly the anti-Mormon *Apache Chief*) fell into mortgage foreclosure, he purchased the paper and ran it as the proprietor. He sold it for a profit eighteen months later. In September 1899, the *St. Johns Herald* identified J. T. LeSueur as the sixth richest taxpayer in Apache County with an assessed

^{78.} Crosby, 43.



J. T. and Geneva LeSueur lived with their eleven children across the street from the Mormon chapel in one of St. Johns' most elegant homes. The home was built in 1891. Courtesy Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, Archives Division. No. 96-2106.

property valuation of nearly \$18,000. Four of the five taxpayers listed ahead of him were business operations.⁷⁹

For all their good fortune, J. T. and Geneva LeSueur could not escape the harsh realities of the region's punishing environment. They still had to purchase fresh water by the bucket from the water wagon and put out pots and pans to catch rainwater, just like everyone else. Their home had no electricity, running water, or flush toilets. Like other frontier families, they emptied and washed bed pans daily, scoured and scrubbed floors from their knees, and washed clothes by hand. Their family wasn't perfect. One of their sons, thirteen-year-old Charley, was convicted of petty larceny in December 1898 after he and four other boys broke into several stores, certainly an embarrassment for such a prominent family. Another time, J. T. stepped in after his oldest sons, James and Frank, had let a family horse run in a race held by raucous cowboys. One of the cowboys wanted to run the horse in another race with Frank riding as the jockey, but he

^{79. &}quot;Who Pays the Taxes?" *St. Johns Herald*, September 30, 1899, 4. In July 1900, LeSueur owned 800 sheep, according to the minutes of the Apache County Board of Supervisors, July 10, 1900, 93.

^{80.} Charles P. Anderson, *Journal of Charles P. Anderson: Writings from 1856-1913*, 28 (December 22, 1898). Anderson served as the St. Johns bishop for eleven years beginning in 1892.

couldn't find anyone willing to bet against Frank. It's unclear whether J. T. stopped further racing to protect his horse or keep his sons away from the horse-racing crowd. But overall, by 1900, J. T. and Geneva had carved out a niche as major contributors to their religious and civic communities. When they moved to St. Johns as young parents in 1880, they lived in a cramped dugout with a dirt floor and ceiling. Twenty years later, J. T. and Geneva lived in the center of town just across the street from the ward chapel in one of St. Johns's largest and most elegant homes. They had ten children, with one more to come.

^{81.} James Warren LeSueur, "My Recollection of Pioneer Days," in *LeSueur Family History*.

CHAPTER 6

HUNT FOR THE KILLERS

n the morning of the funeral, while friends and relatives prepared the remains of Frank LeSueur and Gus Gibbons for burial, Sheriff Edward Beeler led a posse out of town on what would become an obsessive quest to bring back the murderers, dead or alive. Along with saddlebags packed with ammunition and supplies, Beeler carried a heavy load of guilt. Many local citizens believed he had mishandled his sheriff's duties: first, in failing to arrest the outlaws when he caught up to them in St. Johns; and then, in failing to return to the chase while part of his posse remained in the field. "The sheriff was blamed considerable for letting them [Frank and Gus] go on as they did," Joseph Fish, a prominent Arizona Mormon, wrote shortly after the murders. "They were expecting the sheriff to join them, but from some cause he did not go." 1

The Gibbons family was especially angry. Writing many years later, Gus's sister Eva and his Aunt Clarissa castigated Beeler with embellished accounts of his malfeasance. Eva said that when the outlaws arrived in St. Johns, they rode through the town unchallenged, causing trouble for much of the night.² Clarissa said when the outlaws finally left town, Beeler and his men went to a local saloon to drink and gamble and didn't resume their pursuit until the next morning.³ Eva said Beeler had been drinking before he led the chase and got drunk and went to bed when he returned to St. Johns.⁴

No evidence supports these assertions about Beeler and his posse. Nevertheless, many in the community were understandably upset by Beeler's decision to leave the second posse alone on the trail. He too quickly dismissed the possibility that the other posse members would catch up to what were clearly skilled gunmen and the danger that posed. He might

^{1. &}quot;The Life and Times of Joseph Fish, Mormon Pioneer," 417 (March 27, 1900).

^{2.} Arvin Palmer, comp., An Arizona Palmer Family History: Selected Sketches of Arthur Palmer and Evaline Augusta Gibbons Palmer and Their Ancestors, 237.

^{3.} Clarissa Isabell Wilhelm Gibbons, "A Short Sketch of My Life," 14.

^{4.} Palmer, Arizona Palmer Family History, 237.



Apache County Sheriff Edward Beeler was a "nervy looking man . . . as hard as nails," said a Utah reporter. Beeler won high praise as an aggressive but fair lawman until his missteps contributed to the murders of Frank LeSueur and Gus Gibbons. Courtesy Marlin and Nonie Harmon.

not have found the boys in time, but he didn't even try. At the funeral, Gus's uncle Andrew said Frank and Gus were killed because they would not desert the sheriff. Left unspoken was a growing feeling that they were killed because the sheriff had deserted them. Beeler may have shared this belief. "Lesueur [sic] and Gibbons were my personal friends, and they lost their lives in a well-meant effort to assist me," he said.⁵

Until this incident, Beeler had been a popular sheriff, known to be plainspoken, energetic without being overly aggressive, and persistent in tracking down and arresting suspected criminals. He was praised for his ability to maintain law and order in a county that still attracted more than its fair share of rustlers, bandits, and shifty characters. Edward Beeler was born May 5, 1864, in Polk County, Tennessee, to Dr. Milton W. Beeler and Mary Hannah Delaney Cameron. Genealogical records show that his mother died when Ed was two or three years old, and his father died when he was ten. Beeler left Tennessee at age nineteen and headed west. Little is known about his activities, but in September 1887, he wrote to his brother and one of his two sisters from Patterson, New Mexico, where he was working for a cattle company. He wrote briefly but with affection,

^{5.} Salt Lake Herald, June 4, 1900, 2.

^{6.} Familysearch.org.

telling his siblings that "my girl has gon [sic] back on me . . . but it does not bother me much as I am having a great big time with a mexican [sic] Girl." He later moved to Arizona and in 1894 was working as a range foreman for Henry Huning, a Show Low cattleman and store owner. However, Beeler had ambitions beyond being a cowboy tending other men's cattle. He settled in Springerville, a rough cattle town, and purchased 120 acres of land a few miles east of the town, probably with an eye toward cattle ranching. In January 1896, he joined a group of partners to establish the Round Valley Water Storage Company and build a reservoir on the Little Colorado River. While living in Springerville, he also met and fell in love with Mary Hamblin, a young Mormon woman from the nearby town of Nutrioso.

Mary Elizabeth Hamblin was born September 25, 1872, in Kanab, Utah, to Jacob and Sarah Hamblin. Her father, ordained by the Mormon Prophet Brigham Young as an "Apostle to the Lamanites," was renowned for his efforts to proselytize and develop peaceful relations among many of the Western tribes. 10 Jacob was also a polygamist with five known wives, including at least one Native American woman, having followed Young's advice that Mormon men should take Lamanite women as polygamous wives to help bring about the conversion of their people. Jacob died in 1886, and Mary was living with her mother in Nutrioso when she and Beeler courted. Mormons typically did not like their sons and daughters marrying outside the faith, but there is no indication that Hamblin family members objected to Beeler. Subsequent events would suggest they liked the hard-working Tennessean. One of Mary's brothers, Jacob Hamblin Jr., and her cousin, Duane Hamblin, would later become lawmen themselves. Jacob Jr. performed the marriage services in a ceremony held in the Hamblin home on September 27, 1896.11

^{7.} See his September 2, 1887, letter in "Letters Written by Ed Beeler to His Family in 1887 & 1898," RoundValleyAZ.com.

^{8.} St. Johns Herald, March 1, 1894, 4.

^{9.} Apache County deed records show that he purchased the land on October 8, 1895. See also the *St. Johns Herald*, January 11, 1896, 4; and March 6, 1897, 1. An Apache County assessment in July 1897 showed that he owned an unspecified number of dairy cows and two work horses (*St. Johns Herald*, July 17, 1897, 1).

^{10.} See Todd M. Compton, A Frontier Life: Jacob Hamblin, Explorer and Indian Missionary, 435, for Hamblin's 1876 ordination by Young.

^{11.} Edward Beeler and Mary Elizabeth Hamblin Marriage Certificate, September 27, 1896, familysearch.org.

Beeler's affection for Mary was real. "I wish you could see my Darling[.] I know you would like her," Beeler told his sisters. "I never realized I had a heart until I met my Wife." Mary returned Ed's love with equal fervor, as evidenced by the anguished journal entries she would write after he was killed in an ambush. "He was a big man and handsome, too," said Rhoda Gibbons, adding that Mary was "a very pretty girl." 13

Beeler was elected Apache County Sheriff on the Democratic ticket in November 1899, winning 54 percent of 487 votes cast for sheriff. 14 As sheriff, he was responsible for law enforcement in a county larger than the state of Maryland but with a population of just 8,300 inhabitants residing mainly along the Little Colorado River corridor.¹⁵ The county seat and largest town, St. Johns, had a population of about 550, with another 300 or so residents in the town's census district. Beeler had parttime undersheriffs, deputies, and jailers he could call upon for assistance, but ultimately, policing the county was his responsibility. As with most Western sheriffs, his duties went far beyond just arresting suspected law breakers. He oversaw the boarding of prisoners and maintenance of the county jail, served arrest warrants, managed foreclosures, enforced quarantines during disease outbreaks, escorted prisoners to judicial venues and convicted felons to the territorial prison in Yuma, and, if required, carried out executions. He also served as the county assessor for the purpose of levying county taxes. For these services, Beeler received an annual salary of \$1,880, which included his duties as "jailor and janitor." He also received additional funds for mileage and expenses incurred while tracking criminals, transporting prisoners, and performing other sheriff-related duties. 16

^{12.} See his January 11, 1898, letter in "Letters Written by Ed Beeler to His Family in 1887 & 1898."

^{13.} Palmer, Arizona Palmer Family History, 143.

^{14.} Apache County Board of Supervisors Minutes, November 26, 1898, 450, inserted page. Beeler received 265 votes and his opponent, Antonio Gonzales, received 222 votes.

^{15.} When originally established in 1879, Apache County measured more than 21,000 square miles. In 1895, Navajo County was split from Apache County, making Apache County about 11,200 square miles, the size it is today. The population estimate comes from the 1900 census.

^{16.} For discussions of the diverse responsibilities of the western sheriff, see Larry D. Ball, *Desert Lawmen: The High Sheriffs of New Mexico and Arizona, 1846–1912*, 265; and Frank Richard Prassel, *The Western Peace Officer: A Legacy of Law and Order*, 46–47.

The sheriff's job also carried the prospect of deadly confrontations. In the twenty years prior to 1900, at least twenty-five Arizona peace officers were killed in the line of duty, probably more, and even greater numbers were injured in gun battles and brawls.¹⁷ During his first year in office, Sheriff Beeler energetically pursued cattle rustlers and other criminals, and often traveled to remote county outposts and even across state lines to arrest lawbreakers, sometimes accompanied by a deputy but more often riding alone. 18 Long-time Apache County resident Bert Colter said the Smith brothers, a brazen gang of rustlers operating south of Springerville, once threatened Beeler, saying they would kill him if he tried to arrest them. One day, the three brothers and a fourth gang member rode defiantly into Springerville, guns at their sides, and took prominent seats on the sidewalk in front of Gustav Becker's general store. The outlaws positioned themselves so they could see up and down the street if trouble came. To counter their move, Beeler quietly placed five or six men with shotguns above and to the sides of where the gang was sitting. In unison, Beeler and his men shouted for the outlaws to raise their hands and then partially showed themselves to demonstrate to the outlaws that they were surrounded, said Colter, who witnessed the arrest. 19 Beeler disarmed the men and rushed them to St. Johns until their trial, where they were sentenced to the territorial prison. Colter may have embellished his story, but the many newspaper reports of Sheriff Beeler's activities leave no doubt that he was extremely effective in carrying out his duties. "Mr. Beeler is a man suited for the position he holds and is doing some good work in hunting the outlaws down that have raided Apache county for several years past," wrote the editor of the St. Johns Herald just six months into Beeler's term.²⁰

^{17.} This figure comes from "Arizona Line of Duty Deaths," Officer Down Memorial Page. Neither Frank LeSueur nor Gus Gibbons, who were deputized posse members, are listed on this website, so it appears that the number of Arizona peace officers who were killed in the line of duty, including those who were assisting them, is undercounted. Still, the website serves as a valuable resource.

^{18.} Beeler's activities were reported in the *St. Johns Herald*, May 27; June 10 and 17; July 29; August 5, 19, and 26; and September 9, 1899 (page 4 in all issues); and *Arizona Republican*, May 28, 5; August 1, 2; August 8, 4; October 14, 3; and October 22, 1899, 8.

^{19.} C. LeRoy and Mabel R. Wilhelm, *A History of the St. Johns Arizona Stake: The Triumph of Man and His Religion Over the Perils of a Raw Frontier*, 176. Colter, born January 25, 1887, would have been twelve or thirteen years old at the time.

^{20.} June 10, 1899, 4. Two months later, the *St. Johns Herald* editor praised Beeler and his undersheriff, C. H. Sharp, following the arrest and trial of a

In January 1900, Ed and Mary Beeler moved from Springerville to St. Johns, making it easier for Ed to perform his sheriff's duties from the county seat.²¹ About two weeks later, their St. Johns neighbors held "a surprise on Mr. & Mrs. Beeler," most likely a party welcoming them to the community.²² As a devout Mormon, Mary would have attended Sunday services regularly and participated in the women's Relief Society and other church organizations. Whether Ed also attended services is unknown, but he was well known among the Mormons and worked closely with many of them, including the LeSueur and Gibbons families, in carrying out his responsibilities. In a studio photograph, Beeler wears a suit and sports a trim mustache with just a hint of a handlebar, his dark hair pressed neatly to his scalp. By many accounts, he presented an imposing figure. "Sheriff Beeler is a nervy looking man nearly six feet tall, and physically seems to be as hard as nails," wrote a reporter for a Utah newspaper. 23 Beeler told a reporter for the *Phoenix Gazette* that when he traveled from St. Johns to a big town like Phoenix, "everybody looks at me as much as to say, 'there's a fellow from the mountains."24 The reporter wasn't surprised:

It is no wonder that people look at Sheriff Beeler when he comes to town. He is worth looking at, and if a man actually hungered for a real live Fourth of July scrap to last to a finish, he might select Beeler and feel certain that he would have no chance to tell about a disappointment afterwards—that is, if the ability remained to speak about it at all.²⁵

Beeler made clear his preference for small-town living. When a reporter for the *Arizona Republican* asked whether life in St. Johns wasn't rather

suspected rustler, saying, "Sheriff Beeler and Under Sheriff Sharp are doing a great deal to discourage the unlawful handling of cattle" (August 19, 1899, 4).

^{21.} St. Johns Herald, January 20, 1900, 3.

^{22.} Amanda Christina Kempe Hastings, "Memorandum" book, February 6, 1900, 6. Amanda and her family were next-door neighbors of J. T. LeSueur and family.

^{23.} Salt Lake Herald, June 4, 1900, 2. Evans Coleman also described as Beeler as a tough character, saying Beeler understood the kind of men the outlaws were because "Beeler was raised with that class of men. He talked their language; knew their motives, and that life meant nothing to them—neither their own or anothers [sic]." Coleman was the brother of Prime T. Coleman, who later became Beeler's ranch partner. See Evans Coleman to The Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society, February 7, 1953.

^{24.} The *Phoenix Gazette* article was published in the *St. Johns Herald*, August 12, 1899, 1.

^{25.} St. Johns Herald, August 12, 1899, 1.

monotonous, Beeler shook his head. "No," he said. "I suppose it depends on how a man's raised. We never hear anything there until some fellow comes in and tells about it as a reminiscence. We've got so we don't care anything about news." ²⁶

The unpretentious sheriff impressed the big-city reporters. Despite his sturdy appearance, "it should not be understood that Sheriff Beeler looks like a scrapping man," the *Phoenix Gazette* said. "Just the contrary. He looks like a mild, easygoing individual and one who would live many years before seeking trouble. He is gentlemanly and intelligent, and altogether conveys the impression that he is a splendid good fellow to tie to either in peace or war."²⁷

Beeler's easygoing nature would be tested following the murder of his two friends. Immediately after reporting their deaths, he began organizing a posse to capture the outlaws, eventually enlisting ten men. Dick Gibbons named six of those who joined the posse: Will Harris, who had served in the eight-man posse with LeSueur and Gibbons; former Apache County sheriff William W. Berry; Earnest Barrett, a cousin of Henry Barrett, whose cow the outlaws had killed; Elijah Holgate, Dick Gibbons's nephew; Ryan Heart; and a man named Snider. He four unnamed men were from the Mexican-American community. Beeler and his deputies also interviewed witnesses—people who had seen or talked with the outlaws in Springerville and St. Johns—to identify the murderers. Their names and descriptions were published in the next issue of the *St. Johns Herald* and wired to towns throughout the Mountain West. Beeler offered an \$850 reward for the arrest of five suspects identified as:

- John Hunter, who is about 30 years old, dark complexion, black mustache, about 5 ft. 7 in. high, wore a black hat and dark sack coat. This man is also known as Skeet Jones and lived at Ft. Wingate last year.
- Bob Johnson, is supposed to be much like Hunter.

^{26.} Arizona Republican (Phoenix), August 8, 1899, 4.

^{27.} St. Johns Herald, August 12, 1899, 1.

^{28.} Richard Gibbons, "Diary of Richard Gibbons, Copied from His Own Daily Journal and Covering the Time from March 16, 1888 until His Death on January 1, 1924," 263. According to census records, Elija[h] Holgate was a single, thirty-year-old farmer, and Earnest Barrett was a single, twenty-five-year-old laborer living with Henry Barrett. I could not find Ryan Heart or Snider listed in the 1900 census for Apache County.

^{29.} St. Johns Herald, March 31, 1900, 3.

- Wilson, alias Smith, who worked for Wabash Cattle Company for a short time [in] April 1899, in this county. He is about 5 ft. 10 in. high, weighs about 175 lbs., has slightly dark complexion, dark hair and mustache, had short black beard when last seen, is stoop shouldered but quite well appearing, has blue eyes, and is of very pleasing address, but not over talkative, has a peculiar way of ducking his head from side to side when he talks and he usually smiles a great deal when talking. He is an expert bronch [sic] trainer.
- Coley with right forefinger shot off.
- · Unknown man.

The *St. Johns Herald* bemoaned these "indefinite and incomplete" descriptions, but over the next two months Beeler would continue talking to witnesses and other lawmen to refine the descriptions.³⁰ The weekly *St. Johns Herald* published the reward circular with updated descriptions in every issue for the next three months. The Apache County reward quickly grew to \$2,000, which included \$1,000 offered by the county (\$200 for each murderer); \$250 from the Gibbons family; \$500 from the LeSueur family; and \$250 from Beeler himself.³¹ Arizona Governor N. Oakes Murphy, responding to public pressure, would later contribute an additional \$500 in territorial funds for the arrest and conviction of the murderers.³²

Butch Cassidy and Red Weaver remained in the St. Johns jail on charges of horse theft at this time.³³ Arrested under the alias Jim Lowe, Cassidy claimed that his former boss at the WS Ranch, William French, would verify that he was a trustworthy cowboy. Beeler had sent French a wire asking him to confirm Lowe's story, but he had not received a reply before he left, so he put one of his deputies in charge "with the instructions to run the office the best he knew how."³⁴ On Thursday, March 29, sometime in the morning before the funeral, Sheriff Beeler and his posse of ten deputies rode south, taking trails that would lead them southeast into New Mexico and to the Mexico border. In his dispatch to the *Deseret*

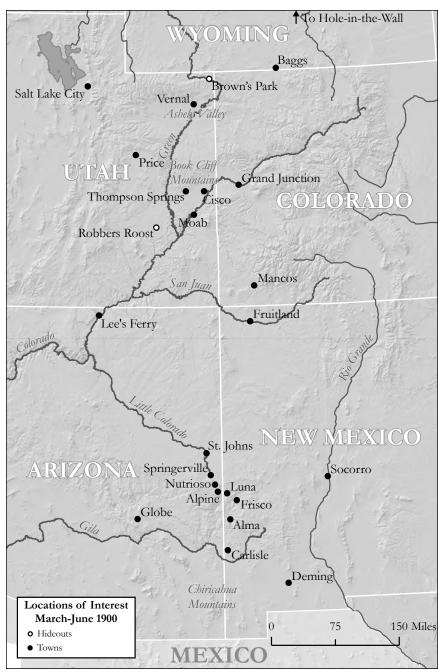
^{30.} St. Johns Herald, April 21, 1900, 3.

^{31.} St. Johns Herald, April 21, 1900, 3. Some reward circulars said that William Gibbons and J. T. LeSueur offered \$750 jointly, but other circulars (for example, St. Johns Herald, June 9, 1900, 3) said that of the \$750, Gibbons offered \$250 and LeSueur \$500.

^{32.} St. Johns Herald, May 19, 1900, 3.

^{33.} The *St. Johns Herald*, March 31, 1900, 3, reported that "Jim Lowe and 'Red' Weaver are in the county bastile [*sic*] here awaiting an investigation."

^{34.} St. Johns Herald, May 12, 1900, 3.



On the Trail of the Outlaws. Map by Abner Hardy, ThinkSpatial, BYU Geography.

Evening News, St. Johns resident John Brown noted that the murderers had a head start of thirty-six hours, making it unlikely they would be overtaken.³⁵ Beeler, however, said "he did not intend to return until he brought a prisoner with him."³⁶

While the outlaws' escape route cannot be traced with precision, newspaper reports of sightings provide clues to their possible whereabouts over the next several days. The outlaws initially headed southeast into New Mexico and on the night of March 29, stole seven horses in Frisco, a town southwest of Reserve.³⁷ Jimmy Gettling, one of the ranchers whose horses were stolen, said he and the other victims were acquainted with the outlaws. The outlaws "didn't want to steal our horses, for they knew how badly it would inconvenience us," Gettling recalled, "but they figured a posse would be on their trail and if [they] themselves didn't take our horses the posse would, and they sure didn't want any fresh-mounted men on their trail." ³⁸ The bandits were headed for Mexico, he said.

The horse thefts triggered a pursuit by a Frisco posse. By Sunday, April 1, Beeler's posse was reportedly riding just an hour behind the outlaws at Jim Crow Mine, near Carlisle, New Mexico. The *Arizona Bulletin* said the posse, recognizing that the outlaws carried "splendid arms," did not press them close enough for a fight.³⁹ Undoubtedly, Beeler and his men proceeded cautiously as they narrowed the gap with their prey, careful to avoid another ambush like the one that felled LeSueur and Gibbons. The outlaws were seen that evening passing through Duncan, Arizona, where Tom Capehart stopped to talk with several people he knew, thus providing another identification linking him to the murders.⁴⁰ On Monday, April 2, the outlaws rode south, killing and eating part of a cow along the way,

^{35.} Deseret Evening News, April 4, 1900, 1. It is unclear precisely when Beeler's posse left town. If the outlaws had a thirty-six-hour head start, this would mean that the posse left in the early daylight hours of March 29. However, Dick Gibbons ("Diary," 263) said Beeler was still organizing the posse around breakfast time, so the posse may not have left until mid-morning. The St. Johns Herald (March 31, 1900, 3) said the posse left on Friday, March 30, but this appears to be incorrect, because Brown said Beeler and his posse had already left by the time he sent his dispatch, which was dated March 29. Charles P. Anderson, Journal of Charles P. Anderson: Writings from 1856–1913, 31, also says the posse left March 29.

^{36.} St. Johns Herald, May 12, 1900, 3.

^{37.} Holbrook Argus, April 14, 1900, 5.

^{38.} Evans Coleman to Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society, January 22, 1953.

^{39.} Arizona Bulletin, April 13, 1900, 7.

^{40.} Arizona Bulletin, April 13, 7.

just as they had done a week earlier in Apache County. They camped that night on the Triangle Ranch, eighteen miles northwest of San Simon and near the northern edge of Cochise County. They resumed their southward retreat the next morning and headed into Arizona's Chiricahua Mountains.

At least two posses continued following the outlaws' trail, but newspapers often carried hearsay and unconfirmed reports, making it difficult to track their movements with confidence. For example, the *El Paso Herald* said, "It is reported that the posse from Frisco, N.M., was waylaid near Duncan and three of them killed." The report was not true. A later false report received in St. Johns said Sheriff Beeler had been killed in a skirmish with the outlaws. The ambush of an Arizona prospector was also blamed on the outlaws by newspapers and lawmen, as was the murder of two men and wounding of a third near the Mexico border, but these also were rumors rather than fact. The ambush of the outlaws by newspapers and lawmen, as was the murder of two men and wounding of a third near the Mexico border, but these also were rumors rather than fact.

As he pursued the outlaws, Beeler consulted with other Arizona and New Mexico lawmen. One of those was George Scarborough, who two years earlier had helped break up the Bronco Bill gang that had been using Apache County's Black River valley as one of its hangouts. 44 Now a range detective for cattle companies, the forty-year-old Scarborough was a tenacious tracker known for his aggressive tactics when dealing with suspected rustlers and criminals—too aggressive, according to some of the men he arrested. Tom Capehart was allegedly beaten by Scarborough after his arrest for the 1897 Steins Pass train robbery. Scarborough himself was tried and acquitted for murder three times for killings he committed as a lawman. Beeler said he warned Scarborough about the LeSueur-Gibbons killers when Scarborough was in Lordsburg, New Mexico, though it is unclear whether Beeler talked with him directly or sent him a wire. 45 Just a day or two later, Scarborough was called to investigate the cow slaughtered by the five outlaws near the Triangle Ranch.

^{41.} El Paso Herald, April 12, 1900, 1.

^{42.} St. Johns Herald, April 28, 1900, 3.

^{43.} St. Johns Herald, April 28, 1900, 3. The prospector, who was thought to be murdered, actually recovered from his wounds. The *Herald* (May 19, 1900, 2) later reported that he had been attacked by Native Americans.

^{44.} For a biography of Scarborough, see Robert K. DeArment, *George Scarborough: The Life and Death of a Lawman on the Closing Frontier.* Utah newspapers said Scarborough was working as a Wells Fargo detective at this time, but DeArment (210) said he was a range detective for cattle companies.

^{45.} Salt Lake Herald, June 4, 1900, 2.

The beef was discovered at the outlaws' abandoned campsite by the ranch's manager, Walt Birchfield.⁴⁶ On April 2, Birchfield wired Scarborough in Deming and asked him to help find the perpetrators. Beeler thought it was his warning to Scarborough that had put the detective on the outlaws' trail, but Birchfield's comments afterward suggest that neither he nor Scarborough understood that these were the same men Beeler was pursuing. "If I had known that outlaws had killed the beef . . . I wouldn't have sent for [Scarborough]," Birchfield said, "as I wouldn't have tackled them just for the beef."

Scarborough and Birchfield followed the outlaws' tracks high into the Chiricahua Mountains. When they spotted the outlaws the next day, Scarborough decided to open fire without warning. "There was no use to call on them to surrender," he said. 48 Scarborough got off three or four shots and Birchfield just one, all missing, and the outlaws scrambled for safety behind some rocks. Scarborough fired two more times when he saw a head pop up, but after a half hour of quiet waiting, he and Birchfield decided to get back on their horses and find a better position. As they made their move, the outlaws opened fire from about 350 yards away. One of the bullets found its mark, striking Scarborough in the right thigh and knocking him from his horse. The force of the bullet from the highpowered rifle completely smashed the bone. As the outlaws poured fire on the men, Birchfield managed to crawl to Scarborough and build a protective mound of rocks around him. The bullets splintered into pieces when they hit the rocks, cutting the men on their arms and head. One of the ricocheting pieces also wounded Birchfield painfully in his left shoulder. At dark, with the outlaws silent and presumably gone, Birchfield rode seventeen miles through rain, sleet, and snow to San Simon, where he recruited several cowboys to return with him in a buckboard to retrieve Scarborough. Someone wired news of the skirmish to Deming and requested a doctor. Birchfield and the men reached Scarborough at daybreak on April 4. He was cold and weak but conscious and begging for

^{46.} DeArment, *George Scarborough*, 222–29; and Jeffrey Burton, *The Deadliest Outlaws: The Ketchum Gang and the Wild Bunch*, 260–66, describe the hunt for the outlaws by Scarborough and Birchfield and their subsequent gunfight.

^{47.} DeArment, *George Scarborough*, 223. Burton (*Deadliest Outlaws*, 261) says that Scarborough would have known of the LeSueur-Gibbons murders by wire from Silver City to Deming, but he probably did not see the connection with the men he was following.

^{48.} DeArment, George Scarborough, 224.

water. When they brought Scarborough back to San Simon, waiting at the railroad station were a doctor, Scarborough's son, Ed, and Sheriff Beeler and two of his deputies. Beeler had heard about the shooting and came to talk with Scarborough and Birchfield.

Scarborough was still conscious and able to speak, but it's not known what information about the outlaws, if any, he passed on to Beeler. However, Beeler learned at least one important detail from Birchfield, who said he recognized the voice of cowboy Tom Capehart among the outlaws. When the outlaws brought down Scarborough with the longrange shot, "there was a big yell, and it was old Capehart," said Birchfield, who had once been Capehart's boss at the Diamond A horse ranch. "I would have knowed him anywhere."49 Other evidence also pointed to Capehart as the suspect initially identified as Wilson, and so Beeler added Tom Capehart's name to the reward circular.⁵⁰ Details about the outlaws who shot Scarborough and Birchfield, such as their weapons, equipment, and horses, persuaded Beeler and others that these were the same men who had murdered LeSueur and Gibbons. Scarborough was placed on the next train to Deming, where the doctor removed shattered pieces of bone from his leg, but Scarborough died in the early morning hours of April 5. Although it is doubtful that Capehart or the other outlaws would have recognized who they were shooting at from such long distance, many people came to believe that Scarborough's killing was an act of revenge by Capehart for the arrest and beating he had suffered at Scarborough's hands. "Capehart got off clear, and swore then he would kill Scarbel [Scarborough] before he died," Beeler said. "He has done it, and killed a brave man, too."51

At the time Scarborough was killed, Beeler's was the only posse pursuing the outlaws. Within a week, three more posses had joined the field, including a posse of six led by Sheriff Jim Blair of Grant County, New Mexico, and a party led by former Cochise County Sheriff John Slaughter.⁵² Birchfield remained with Beeler in San Simon to help organize and join the pursuit. The lawmen followed the outlaws south toward the Mexico border, even crossing into Mexico before turning north and

^{49.} DeArment, 239-40.

^{50.} St. Johns Herald, April 21, 1900, 3.

^{51.} Salt Lake Herald, June 4, 1900, 2.

^{52.} Deseret Evening News, April 19, 1900, 4; Arizona Republican, May 7, 1900, 4; and Burton, Deadliest Outlaws, 268. Dick Gibbons ("Diary," 266) also reported that four posses were trailing the outlaws.

chasing them into Colorado. 53 According to the *Graham Guardian*, Beeler employed ten Navajo men to help him track the outlaws.⁵⁴ Another report said the outlaws received the help of a local guide to pilot them through New Mexico's canyons and plains. "Their camps were made in places so nearly inaccessible that it would have been impossible to have taken them by surprise," the El Paso Daily Herald said. 55 Several reports said the outlaws continued to steal horses from ranches along the way, giving them an advantage with fresh mounts.⁵⁶ The outlaws typically traveled in two groups, Beeler said, with one or two men riding a day behind to monitor their pursuers. Soiled bandages found at each of the outlaws' deserted campsites provided further confirmation that one of the outlaws had been wounded at the initial shootout by the St. Johns bridge.⁵⁷ Although Beeler undoubtedly benefited from the experience of the fifty-eight-year-old Slaughter, the posse never got close enough to engage the outlaws in a fight. Scarborough's murder and the horse stealing brought new posses into the field, while lawmen throughout many parts of Arizona and New Mexico watched carefully for signs of the outlaws. Together, they dogged the murderers as they fled through the Western badlands and mountains, giving the outlaws little rest and forcing them into desperate, uncomfortable lives on the run while tending to a wounded companion.

Sometime in late April, Sheriff Beeler received word that one of the alleged killers had been seen hauling wood into Globe, Arizona, and so Beeler left the chase to investigate. The suspect, William "Coley" Morris, had been incorrectly identified in the first reward circular as missing his right forefinger. The second known circular, which was published three weeks later, corrected the error and accurately assigned the missing fore-

^{53.} Salt Lake Herald, June 4, 1900, 2; and Arizona Republican, May 7, 1900, 4.

^{54.} Graham Guardian, June 22, 1900, 1.

^{55.} El Paso Daily Herald, April 12, 1900, 1.

^{56.} Graham Guardian, June 22, 1900, 1, said the outlaws stole twenty horses from the WS Ranch in Alma, which, if true, was the same ranch where Cassidy and other gang members had worked. The *Albuquerque Citizen*, June 20, 1900, 3, said the outlaws stole ten horses near Wilcox and another thirty horses north of the White Mountains. It is impossible to verify whether these thefts were committed by the five fleeing outlaws.

^{57.} Lois Hamblin Golding and Delma Golding Johnson, *Our Golden Heritage: The Duane and Addie Noble Hamblin Family*, 57.

^{58.} Arizona Republican, May 7, 1900, 4.

finger to a different suspect, Tod Carver. Beeler found Morris on May 2 on a ranch outside of Globe where he was working. Morris gave his name as Bill Morris but said he was sometimes called Coley Morris. He offered no resistance when Beeler arrested him, saying he would accompany the sheriff to St. Johns without trouble, because "he was not the man wanted." A wire report stated, "Morris admits being an acquaintance with members of the gang, but says he was not interested," an odd admission suggesting he may have been invited—or, at least, had the opportunity—to join the outlaws. Morris also contended that he could easily prove his alibi. Beeler arrived in St. Johns with Morris on Monday, May 7. Beeler had returned to town with a prisoner, just as he had vowed when he left more than a month earlier.

During Beeler's absence, both Jim Lowe and Red Weaver had been released from the St. Johns jail, though on different days and for different reasons. Lowe had told Beeler that Weaver "was a stranger he had picked up on the road," and that William French, foreman of the WS Ranch in Alma, could confirm his identity. 62 It's unknown what Weaver told the sheriff, but he apparently went along with Lowe's story to prevent Beeler from discovering Lowe's identity. French said he received a wire from the Apache County sheriff asking about Lowe and Weaver.

The telegram presented French with a dilemma. He clearly knew that Lowe was the infamous Butch Cassidy, leader of a gang that had committed numerous robberies and murders. Yet, French liked Lowe and considered him an excellent trail boss. French said that neither he nor Lowe thought much of Weaver. "I afterwards heard that Jim was anxious to get rid of him [Weaver] as he regarded him as merely a bluffer with no definite claim to be classed as a member of the 'Wild Bunch,'" French said. Lowe claimed Weaver "lacked the necessary courage or sand when it came to a show down." Weaver wanted to be considered a member of the Wild Bunch, but he served primarily as a messenger, not as someone who could be trusted to carry off a robbery. "They always paid him well for his services," French said, "with instructions to keep his mouth shut if he didn't want to hear from them unpleasantly."

^{59.} Arizona Republican, May 7, 1900, 4.

^{60.} Reprinted in the *San Francisco Call*, May 7, 1900, 1; *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7, 1900, 3; and *St. Johns Herald*, May 12, 1900, 3.

^{61.} St. Johns Herald, May 12, 1900, 3.

^{62.} Captain William French, Recollections of a Western Ranchman, 277.

^{63.} French, 277.

^{64.} French, 277.

Perhaps French also feared that he would hear unpleasantly from the outlaws if he revealed Lowe's identity, but more likely he was adhering to the Western code of minding your own business. If an outlaw wasn't stealing *your* money or rustling *your* cattle, then his activities were none of your affair. French said Beeler's telegram merely asked whether he knew Jim Lowe and Bruce Weaver. "After thinking the matter over I sent him a reply saying I did," French said. With that information, the district attorney authorized the release of Lowe on March 31, two days after Beeler left St. Johns with his posse. With his decision to keep Lowe's identity a secret, rather than reveal to Apache County authorities that they had arrested Butch Cassidy, French helped prolong Cassidy's criminal career and possibly abetted the deaths of additional lawmen who crossed paths with the Wild Bunch.

French was apparently mistaken in his recollection that he vouched for both Lowe and Weaver, because the Apache County district attorney kept Weaver locked up pending further investigation. Lowe, who claimed not to know Weaver, probably also claimed he knew nothing about how Weaver acquired the extra horses, thus letting the Wild Bunch wannabe take the fall for the stolen horses. An investigation by Apache County officials discovered that the horses were indeed stolen. On April 8, Socorro County Deputy Cal Ashby picked up Weaver from the St. Johns jail and returned him to Socorro, where he was jailed on charges of horse stealing. Two newspapers reported that during the journey, Ashby "extracted a partial confession" from Weaver implicating him in the LeSueur-Gibbons murders. Weaver's reported confession was—or should have been—a significant development in identifying the killers, because Weaver could have provided the names of the five men who rode through Springerville

^{65.} French, 276. French (277) said Apache County officials allowed Lowe to take the stolen horses with him, but this is unlikely. If Apache officials had determined the horses were not stolen, they would not have had any reason to hold Weaver. It is more logical to believe that they detained both Weaver and the horses, which they turned over to the Socorro County deputy when he escorted Weaver back to Socorro County.

^{66.} Apache County Jail Record states that James Lowe arrived on March 27, 1900, and was released March 31 by the authority of the district attorney.

^{67.} Apache County Jail Record states that Weaver arrived on March 27, 1900, and was released April 8 into the custody of a Socorro County deputy. *The Socorro Chieftain* (New Mexico), April 14, 1900, 1, identifies the deputy as Cal Ashby.

^{68.} Las Vegas Daily Optic (New Mexico), April 16, 1900, 2; and Albuquerque Daily Citizen, April 19, 1900, 3.

and St. Johns. But the article contains no additional details as to what Weaver told Ashby, nor does there appear to have been any follow-up to find out what Weaver might have known. Sheriff Beeler had suspected that Weaver and Lowe were connected to the outlaws. That's why he arrested them. But there is no indication that Beeler was informed of Weaver's alleged confession. That Weaver could have been persuaded to reveal the identities of the five murderers is doubtful, given the likely retribution from his comrades, but under questioning, he might have inadvertently provided information helpful in tracking down the killers.

On April 27, a Socorro grand jury indicted both Weaver and Lowe for horse stealing, although only Weaver was present. ⁶⁹ After being released from the St. Johns jail, Lowe made his way quietly to Utah, trying his best to avoid the firestorm ignited by his gang. He had no intention of returning to Socorro County to face the horse-stealing charge and risk identification. ⁷⁰ Weaver pleaded not guilty and requested his trial be postponed so he could secure witnesses who would confirm his alibi and testify that Lowe told Weaver and others that he (Lowe) had purchased the stolen horses from the owner. ⁷¹ On May 4, Weaver posted bail of \$1,000 and was released from jail. ⁷² However, the 1900 census shows Weaver again sitting in the Socorro County jail in mid-June, though it is unknown whether the incarceration was related to this charge or a new one. ⁷³ Subsequent events would show that he was released again before his trial.

Meanwhile, Sheriff Beeler kept Bill "Coley" Morris jailed while he investigated his alibi. The nature of his alibi is unknown, but after a few days, Apache County authorities began to doubt Morris's guilt. District Attorney Alfred Ruiz could not find any witnesses who could identify

^{69.} New Mexico Territory vs. Bruce Weaver and James Lowe, April 27, 1900, "Larceny of horses"; and *Socorro Chieftain*, April 28, 1900, 1. A plea of not guilty for the two men was entered April 28, according to *Socorro Chieftain*, May 5, 1900, 1.

^{70.} Burton, *Deadliest Outlaws*, 269, states that Cassidy (Lowe) appeared in person for the April 27–28 Socorro County court proceedings. However, there is no record of Lowe being jailed or posting bail, as is the case for Weaver. It is highly unlikely that Cassidy would have voluntarily returned to Socorro County to face a charge of horse stealing after he was released from the St. Johns jail, especially given the general excitement over the recent killings in Arizona and New Mexico. The risk of discovery would have been too great.

^{71.} New Mexico Territory vs. Bruce Weaver and James Lowe, April 27, 1900, "Larceny of horses."

^{72.} Socorro Chieftain, May 12, 1900, 1.

^{73.} US 1900 Census for Socorro County, New Mexico.

Morris as one of the five outlaws who rode through St. Johns, and on May 12 the *St. Johns Herald* reported: "Sheriff Beeler informs us that it is very probable that his man, captured near Globe, is not one of the murderers of Lesueur [*sic*] and Gibbons." Soon thereafter, Beeler reached the definite conclusion that Morris was innocent and released him. The next reward circular published in the *St. Johns Herald* dropped Morris as suspect. He was never again listed or sought in connection with the murders.

Why was Morris mistakenly identified as a one of the killers? Wild Bunch members used multiple aliases, sometimes adopting the names of cowboys they knew. This threw suspicion onto others while causing confusion as to their real identities, especially if they resembled in some way the men whose names they borrowed. One of the five outlaws, perhaps Tod Carver, may have used Coley as an alias when they travelled through Apache County, thus creating the desired confusion and wasting of resources tracking down the wrong man. Some historians have mistakenly asserted that Morris was, in fact, Tod Carver, leading them to conclude that Beeler arrested and then unwittingly released one of the probable murderers.⁷⁶ It's true that the initial reward circular identified Coley as missing his right forefinger; however, even before Beeler arrested Coley Morris, the updated reward circular stipulated that it was Tod Carver, not Morris, who had the missing forefinger. When the Arizona Republican reported on Morris's arrest, the paper incorrectly said he was missing his right forefinger, probably relying on the initial circular's description of him.⁷⁷ After Morris secured his release and his name was removed from the Apache County reward circular, the subsequent circulars continued to list "Tod Carver, with right forefinger off," as a suspect. 78 The close attention given to this particular detail in the evolving reward circulars shows that Beeler and other Apache County authorities clearly understood that they were looking for a man who was missing a forefinger—and Morris was not that man.

^{74.} St. Johns Herald, May 12, 1900, 3.

^{75.} St. Johns Herald, May 19, 1900, 3.

^{76.} See, for example, Burton, *Deadliest Outlaws*, 268; Mark T. Smokov, *He Rode with Butch and Sundance: The Story of Harvey "Kid Curry" Logan*, 140; Donna B. Ernst, "Unraveling Two Outlaws Named Carver," 30; and Donna B. Ernst, "A Deadly Year for St. Johns Lawmen," 20.

^{77.} Arizona Republican, May 7, 1900, 4.

^{78.} St. Johns Herald, May 19, 1900, 3.

With Coley Morris now ruled out as one of the killers, Beeler published an updated list of suspects:

- Tom Capehart, alias wilson [sic], who worked for Wabash Cattle Company, in Apache County, Arizona, a short while in 1899. He is about five feet ten inches tall, weighs about 175 pounds, has slightly dark complexion, dark hair and mustache, had short black beard when last seen, is stoop shouldered but quite well appearing, has blue eyes, and is of very pleasing address, but not very talkative, has a peculiar way of ducking his head from side to side and at the same time forward while he talks, and he usually smiles a great deal when talking. He is an expert bronch trainer.⁷⁹
- Tod Carver, with right forefinger off, slender built, about five feet ten and one half inches high, weight about 175 pounds, has black eyes and moustache, is very active, but is not talkative. He is thought to wear a five and one half boot.
- Jess Black, alias Franks, is five feet eight or nine inches in height, has very dark complexion, black beard, and black eyes, and weighs about 175 pounds. He is very quiet.
- Mack Steen alias Bob Johnson, six feet high, weighs about 180 pounds, is light complexioned with light blue eyes, and very heavy sandy mustache, and is of a very quiet and reserved disposition.
- Also a fifth and unknown man, who is very dark complexioned, has black, straight hair, is low heavy set, and is also very quiet.

The list of names corresponded well with the aliases the outlaws were known to use. Tom Capehart, of course, was known in the county and identified by his real name. Tod Carver was an alias used by T.C. Hilliard, but he too had punched cows in Arizona and New Mexico and was readily identified by his missing forefinger. Will Carver often used "G.W. Franks" as an alias, while Ben Kilpatrick, the tallest of the group, would have been Mack Steen. Harvey Logan, also known as Kid Curry, was likely the unnamed fifth man, as he had recently journeyed with Kilpatrick to Alma. The physical descriptions correspond roughly to the named outlaws,

^{79.} This description of Capehart aligns well with an 1899 Cochise County sheriff's log, which described Capehart as "5 ft 10 in, 170 lbs, dark complexion; black hair inclined to baldness at the front, black moustache, not heavy, not very talkative. When he laughs it is very loud" (Donna B. Ernst, "The Real Tom Capehart," 40).

^{80.} St. Johns Herald, May 19, 1900, 3.

who disguised their appearance by dyeing their hair and growing varying lengths of beards and mustaches, which they also dyed.

Some later accounts identified Bill Smith and his gang as the murderers, but Smith, like Capehart and Tod Carver, was no stranger to Apache County citizens.⁸¹ In fact, two years earlier, Smith had been arrested and jailed in St. Johns on charges of rustling Henry Barrett's cattle. If his gang had been involved, he or a fellow gang member would certainly have been recognized when they stopped to buy supplies in Springerville and St. Johns prior to the killings. Barrett and Sheriff Beeler, who may have initially thought they were chasing Smith, also would have recognized him during the shootout at the bridge. Yet Beeler and other local authorities did not consider Bill Smith to be a suspect. In contrast, multiple pieces of evidence point to the five Wild Bunch outlaws. Four were known to have been together in Alma: Capehart, Will Carver, Kilpatrick, and Logan. How and when Tod Carver joined the group is unclear, but his identification as a participant is well supported. The fact that the five men left a letter in Springerville for Cassidy and Weaver also bolsters their identification as Cassidy's Wild Bunch comrades. Subsequent events during the posse's chase also strengthen this conclusion. Logan's identification as a participant is not as strong as the other four, but his close connection with the group at this time, as well as the violent course they pursued as they travelled north, suggest a murderous and vengeful intent not inconsistent with Logan's character. Beeler himself later came to believe that Logan was one of the LeSueur-Gibbons murderers.82

Morris's release meant Sheriff Beeler was no closer to capturing any of the murderers than when he had begun his pursuit six weeks earlier. Given Beeler's obvious desire to avenge his friends' murders and satisfy an aggrieved community, it is to his credit that he did not try to beat a con-

^{81.} Arizona Republic, August 16, 1988, C7. Another gang sometimes mentioned in connection with the murders was the "Bronco" Bill Walters gang, which included Red Pipken. But that gang had broken up the previous year. At the time LeSueur, Gibbons, and Scarborough were murdered, Walters was imprisoned in the New Mexico Territorial Penitentiary, serving a life sentence for second-degree murder, while Pipken was in jail awaiting trial for grand larceny, a charge for which he would be convicted. See Karen Holliday Tanner and John D. Tanner Jr., *The Bronco Bill Gang*, 155–64.

^{82.} Pinkerton's records, Box 89, Folder 4 (Tom Capehart), memo, January 28, 1902, on "Tom Capehart, alias Bud Wilson, Train Robber."

fession out of Morris or push to prosecute an innocent man. Or maybe Morris had an alibi that was too airtight to ignore.

When Beeler left the chase to arrest Morris, most of the various lawmen and deputies who had joined his posse following Scarborough's murder returned home. County sheriffs were typically responsible for paying a posse's expenses and afterward getting reimbursed by their county governments, which were not always swift or dependable in paying such expenses, especially if the manhunt failed. 83 And many county governments, often cash-strapped if not broke, were reluctant to fund lengthy pursuits of criminals. New Mexico lawmen remained on the alert after Beeler's departure, but it is uncertain whether any were actively pursuing the outlaws. Beeler, however, was determined to capture the murderers. After releasing Morris, he rode back into the field on May 18 with two or three deputies whom he continued to pay out of his own pocket.⁸⁴ Remarkably, Beeler picked up the outlaws' trail as they headed north through New Mexico. Riding hard, Beeler and his men were rapidly closing the gap on the desperadoes when heavy rains stopped them at the ferry crossing at the San Juan River near Fruitland. Locals informed Beeler that the outlaws had already crossed the river. Three of the murderers took the ferry, while the other two, perhaps arriving later in the midst of a rising river, shoved their horses into the water and swam across holding onto their horses' tails.85 Continuing rain forced Beeler to wait three days before he could renew his pursuit. While waiting, Beeler wrote a letter to Grand County Sheriff Jesse Tyler in Moab, Utah, providing descriptions of the five outlaws who had already killed three lawmen. As it turned out, Sheriff Tyler and one of his deputies, Sam Jenkins, had recently run down another Wild Bunch member, George "Flatnose" Currie.

Both Jesse Tyler and Samuel Jenkins were born to large Mormon families, though it is unclear whether either man was an active churchgoer. The forty-three-year-old Tyler was born in the southern Utah town of Beaver, spent his formative years in Fillmore and, at about age thirty-three, moved to Grand County. Single and apparently never married,

^{83.} Ball, Desert Lawmen, 212-13.

^{84.} Dick Gibbons ("Diary," 270) states that his nephew Elijah Holgate was among those in Beeler's posse.

^{85.} Salt Lake Herald, June 4, 1900, 2.

^{86.} *Grand Valley Times* (Moab), June 1, 1900, 1. The US Census has Tyler's family living in Beaver in 1860 and Fillmore in 1870.

Tyler had lived in Grand County for ten years after moving from Fillmore. People who knew him described him as an "Honest Jack" and "a man above reproach" with "sterling integrity." Elected to his first term as Grand County Sheriff by one vote in November 1898, Tyler had gained the respect of local citizens as a hard-working, effective lawman. 88 "He was always fearless in the discharge of his duty," said the *Grand Valley Times*. "He has probably done as much to put down the outlaws as any other man in the state in the time he has been sheriff." 89

Samuel F. Jenkins was born and raised in Ogden, the tenth of thirteen children. He had married Joanna Reynolds in 1878, but she either died or they divorced before having children. The forty-six-year-old Jenkins was now single but engaged to be married. A small-time rancher with a band of horses and about twenty cattle, he served regularly as a deputy to Sheriff Tyler. He also owned a hotel in Park City. Like Tyler, Jenkins was well known and popular among local residents, particularly the area's Ute Native Americans, who regarded Jenkins as a "warm friend." Plant of the tenth of thirteen children.

Tyler and Jenkins were tracking cattle rustlers when they encountered Flatnose Currie. Currie, then twenty-eight or twenty-nine, was a longtime partner of Harvey Logan and Logan's brother Lonie. The trio began as cattle and horse thieves before joining up with the Wild Bunch as bank and train robbers. Those who knew Currie said he was an outstanding marksman with both a pistol and a rifle and described him as "always genial and a 'good fellow.'"⁹² George Bissell, a Wyoming rancher who employed Currie as a cowboy for four years, said Currie "was the best he ever saw."⁹³ Currie was also a killer, as was his former protégé, Harvey Logan. Among those killed in shoot-outs with the two outlaws were Johnson County Deputy Sheriff William "Billy" Deane in 1897 and Converse County Sheriff Josiah Hazen in June 1899.⁹⁴

^{87.} Grand Valley Times, June 1, 1900, 1.

^{88.} Moab Times Independent, December 22, 1949, 1.

^{89.} Grand Valley Times, June 1, 1900, 1.

^{90.} Marriage details from familysearch.org.

^{91.} Salt Lake Tribune, June 1, 1900, 1; and Salt Lake Tribune, May 29, 1900, 2.

^{92.} Salt Lake Herald, April 23, 1900, 2.

^{93.} Salt Lake Tribune, April 22, 1900, 1; and Salt Lake Herald, April 23, 1900, 2.

^{94.} Smokov, *Harvey "Kid Curry" Logan*, 54–56, 103, describes the likely roles of Currie, Kid Curry, and their compatriots in the killing of sheriffs Deane and Hazen.

Hazen was killed while pursuing Currie, Logan, and the Sundance Kid after they robbed a Union Pacific train of up to \$50,000 near Wilcox, Wyoming. Following the holdup, Currie split off from fellow Wild Bunch outlaws and rustled cattle with Tom Dilley in Utah's Green River country. Their activities caught the attention of Sheriff Tyler and Uintah County Sheriff William Preece, and the two sheriffs joined forces to track down the duo. On April 16, their combined posse, which also included Sam Jenkins, came upon Currie in the Book Cliff Mountains while he was on foot and called for him to surrender. "D-m if I will. I will die first," Currie shouted before firing at Preece.⁹⁵ Still without a horse, Currie fled to the Green River, which he crossed that night under cover of darkness, and then took refuge behind some boulders on a hill near the river. The posse surrounded Currie's hiding place the next morning, April 17, and after exchanging gunfire into the afternoon, they killed the outlaw with four bullets that found their mark, including a shot to his right temple.⁹⁶ Currie's Winchester was still cocked and ready to fire when a deputy took it from the dead man's hands. 97

The lawmen didn't immediately know who they had killed, but once the dead man was identified as the wanted train robber and alleged murderer George Currie, Salt Lake City newspapers reported enthusiastically on the gun battle that led to his death. In addition, the Pacific Express Company of the Union Pacific had offered a \$3,000 reward for Currie's capture—dead or alive—following the Wilcox train robbery. Tyler, Jenkins, and four other posse members were now slated to receive equal shares of \$500 each for their roles in bringing him down. Re few weeks after the incident, Sam Jenkins was visiting Salt Lake City and stopped at Zang's saloon to talk with an old friend, Frank Lambert, who was employed at the saloon. Their conversation flowed to Jenkins's recent service as a deputy, and Jenkins recounted the cunficht with Flatnose George.

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