



The Night Frisco Slim Murdered Mr. Howard

by Phil Pezzaglia

It was but a few minutes past 1 a.m. on the morning of January 20, 1892, when night watchman John Howard appeared on the California Transportation Company's wharf to make his rounds as part of the regular performance of his duties. The wharf was as quiet as usual when Mr. Howard caught a glimpse of a man at the upper slip. It was quite out of the ordinary to see anyone around the slips this time of night. Howard started towards the individual, who apparently was not aware of his presence on the wharf, to inquire upon his business there at such an unusual hour. The gentleman in question apparently did not notice the watchman until he was within about thirty feet of him. It was at that point in time that Howard first spoke. The man turned upon him as quick as a flash and emptied the contents of a shotgun into his stomach. Howard quickly pulled his revolver and returned fire. As his shots rang through the calm night air, two other men came running out of the warehouse.

The two other men as well as the shooter slipped into a nearby boat and headed out across the river. Howard emptied the six chambers of his revolver, at the fleeing assailants, but he did not believe that any of the shots struck them or their boat.

Robert C. Carter, a local tinsmith whose home was not far from the wharf, heard the shooting and at once repaired to the wharf. When he arrived he found John Howard in a very critical condition, but with sufficient strength yet remaining to enable him to relate the circumstances of the case.

Carter at once secured medical and other assistance, and after the wounded man was cared for, Constables John Fiscus, Wm. Elliott and Henry Hartin made an investigation of the warehouse scene. Their investigation found that the burglars had entered the office through the back door, the same door that led into the body of the warehouse. It was here that they had commenced tampering with the safe. The burglars had succeeded in having knocked off both hinges and the knobs, and drilled well into the door, but were evidently frightened off just before blowing the safe open. The contents of the safe was approximately \$500.

The wounds inflicted upon the watchman were fatal. John Howard lost his life that day in the line of duty.

During the investigation into the watchman's murder, it was discovered that the tools left behind by the would-be burglars had been stolen from a blacksmith shop at Antioch. A few days after the murder two men were arrested in a scow at Antioch as suspects to the crime against Mr. Howard. The men were taken to Fairfield, where they were held in jail for several weeks. One of the men, known as "Specs," turned state's evidence, implicating three other men in the burglary and murder: the other man arrested with him, Friedell, as well as two others, a twenty-year-old by the name of Lee Horrell and a young man known as "Frisco Slim."

Friedell was tried and given life in the penitentiary. It was several months before Horell was arrested in Los Angeles, and brought back to Fairfield. He pleaded guilty to the charges, and was also given life.

REWARD!

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, }
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT. }

WHEREAS, On or about the twentieth day of January, A. D. 1892, at Rio Vista, in the County of Solano, State of California, JOHN HOWARD was murdered by some person or persons unknown;

Now, Therefore, I, H. H. MARKHAM, Governor of the State of California, by virtue of the authority in me vested by the Constitution and laws of this State, do hereby offer a reward of

\$300

(Three Hundred Dollars) for the arrest and conviction of said unknown person or persons, said reward to be paid only upon conviction.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State to be hereunto affixed, this the fifth day of February, A. D. 1892.

H. H. MARKHAM,
Governor.

Witness:
E. G. WAITE, Secretary of State.

It took nearly two years before the law caught up with Frisco Slim in Chicago. Sheriff Henderson had continued the search for Slim but was very discouraged over the lack of leads and the time that had elapsed. You can imagine his excitement when he received a telegram in December of 1893 from Chicago stating that they had arrested his man. Sheriff Henderson at once traveled to Chicago, secured his prisoner and brought him back to Fairfield.

Frisco Slim's trial was concluded on February 1, 1894. The following account of the trial was printed in the February 9, 1894, edition of the Sacramento River News:

Slim tried to prove an alibi, and was supported by Horrell who was brought from San Quentin to testify. Horrell said that McPhillips, alias "Frisco Slim," had quarreled with one of the gang about two days prior to the murder and had left the party, the deed being subsequently committed by the witness and his partners, Wells, alias "Specs," and John Friedell.

This testimony differed materially from that given by him at the time of his conviction, but as the defendant's testimony was substantially the same as

that of Horrell's, for a time it seemed that a verdict of acquittal would be the result, and this caused considerable excitement among the spectators.

During an interview at the State Prison, convict Friedell related the same story as Horrell testified to, but when placed on the stand, weakened, and his testimony was the same as he gave at the time of his conviction.

McPhillips testified that he has a father and two sisters residing at 18 Middle Street, near the corner of California and Fillmore Streets, San Francisco, and that he was at their home on the night the murder was committed.

The jury, feeling fully satisfied that McPhillips was the ringleader of the gang and responsible for the crime, although he did not fire the fatal shot, brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree, naming life imprisonment as the punishment.

A terrible crime was committed on the morning of January 20, 1892, which cost Mr. John Howard his life. But justice did prevail, even though it took two years and one month to bring a sentence to the last of the would-be burglars turned murderers.

Museum Notes . . .

- ❖ **NEEDED:** A California State Flag is needed for an upcoming display. Do you have one to donate?
- ❖ **NEEDED:** Volunteers to iron uniforms for museum displays.
- ❖ **WANTED:** Pictures and information about the local gas wells.

. . . and Happenings

- ❖ **SAVE THE DATE** — The annual Hamburger Barbecue will be held on Monday, May 22nd.
- ❖ **WANTED:** Rio Vista special recipes from old community cookbooks; specifically, recipes for Riverview cinnamon buns, duck, and anything that YOU think is special to the community.

Museum Tour Coordinator Still Needed

The Rio Vista Museum is looking for a tour coordinator. The position does not require an extensive knowledge of Rio Vista or the items in the Rio Vista Museum. The tour coordinator serves as the Museum's host to outside groups. The duties of the tour coordinator include the following:

- Serve as a contact person for groups wanting to visit the Rio Vista Museum.
- Arrange to meet the group touring the Museum. Groups touring the Museum seldom stay beyond two hours. This is usually during the week.
- Depending on the size of the tour, contact extra persons who will help with the tour. The Museum has a list of volunteers who are willing to come to the Museum to help with tours.

If you are interested in this position or have questions about it, please feel free to contact Pete Hamilton. His phone number is 374-2145. You can e-mail him at pshamilton51@yahoo.com.

Curator's Corner

by Phil Pezzaglia

This past year was a busy one for the Rio Vista Museum. More than 65 "Deed of Gift" forms were filled out, with each donation containing anywhere from 1 to over 100 items. Thus, many hours were spent identifying, dating and assigning catalog numbers to said items, before either placing them on display or in the archives.

New shelving was purchased for the archives, and if this past year is any indication, it will not take long before all the new shelves are filled.

In 2016 items received included drafting tools; sports memorabilia (regarding local athletes who played semi-professional ball); Rio Vista Centennial items; RVHS, Riverview, and D.H. White School yearbooks; toys; tools; maps; newspaper printing stamps; military and law enforcement uniforms; Bass Derby memorabilia; City of Rio Vista Planning Commission agendas and minutes; to name but a few.

We are accepting all items pertaining to Rio Vista's 159-year history. The museum is also interested in items or artifacts from the surrounding areas of Montezuma Hills (Birds Landing, Collinsville, Denverton, etc.) and the Sacramento River Delta (towns, islands, etc.).

The museum recently acquired the Cub Scout Pine Wood Derby Track. This was the one-and-only track used for several decades and by generations of local Cub Scouts. At some point in the future, a display of local scouting will be developed. If anyone has any Pine Wood Derby Cars, scout memorabilia (Cub, Boy, Webelo, Explorer, Girl, etc.), it would be greatly appreciated.

In a continuing effort to collect information on all facets of local history, I would be interested in compiling information on the establishment of all the local organizations and clubs as well as compiling lists of past presidents and meeting locations (halls, etc.).

Clothing is always of interest, whether it be wedding, formal or dated dresses; tuxedos; uniforms (military, law enforcement, etc.); club or organization jackets, vests, etc.

Please contact the museum if you have anything that you would like to donate.

Another Successful Christmas Faire

by Nora Crane

Early December again saw the museum overflowing with holiday spirit as our annual Olde Tyme Christmas Faire fund-raising event was extremely successful. We would like to thank all of our vendors who continue to bring unique items for our customers to buy. An additional thank you to those who donated to our popular bake sale and to our vendors for donating raffle prizes!

Jennifer Azevedo; David Barnes; Dee Bush; Linda Fead; Lena Gibson & Ruth LaMell; Mary Gamazza; DeeDee Golden, Terri Henderson; Judy Katona & Jamie Victor; Ashly Lenholtz; Shelly Maynard & Linda Silva; Kathy Meers; Gregory Mitchell; Karen Mills; The Soroptomists; Fran & Julianne Seegmiller; Bonita & Mike Stewart; Cindy Stewart & Jill Graham; Renee Tingey; Mark Weiss; and Pat Williams.

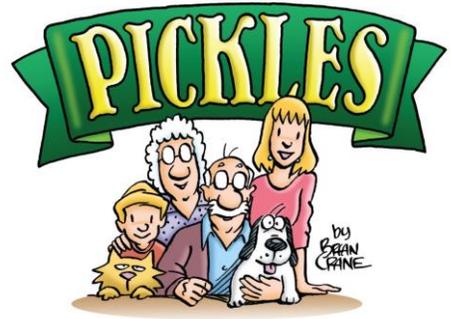
This year we were also blessed to have 'DJ Jose' play Christmas music for us on Saturday.

A special thank you to our committee members who helped make it all happen: Dana Lapp, Gail Machado, Joyce Metcalf, Jake Ricketts, Josiah Tingey, Janet Blegen, Bev Bellows, Peter Hamilton, Suzanne Goldberg and Renee Tingey.



See you next December!

Annual Membership Meeting Attendees Enjoy “Pickles” Program



On the evening of January 30, a lively crowd of members and visitors crowded into the museum’s back room where they were entertained by cartoonist Brian Crane, creator of the long-running syndicated “Pickles” comic strip. Brian regaled the audience with stories of his childhood artistic endeavors as well as his mid-life decision about 25 years ago to try to create a marketable comic strip.

The audience enjoyed seeing and hearing about the evolution of the “Pickles” characters. Brian amused the attendees with stories of the real-life characters, his family members, who inspire the vignettes. It was easy to see why “Pickles” has been so successful—syndicated in about 800 newspapers, winner of several prestigious awards, and loved by millions of faithful readers.

Museum members approved the slate of officers and directors for 2017. Several people won raffle items which included “Pickles” books as well as Rio Vista Museum items. Refreshments included homemade bread, jams, and, of course, pickles.

Remember, if you have not yet sent in your 2017 dues, please do so now. The museum depends on these funds.



MUSEUM OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Renee Tingey	President
Janet Blegen	Vice-President
Carlos Zepeda	Treasurer
Peter Hamilton	Recording Secretary
Nora Crane	Membership Secretary
Gail Machado	Business Memberships
Mary Anne Peterson	Corresponding Secretary
Suzanne Goldberg	Newsletter Editor
Jake Ricketts	Steve Willey
Beverly Bellows	Kathy Meers
Dana Lapp	

Memorials

On behalf of the Rio Vista Museum, we would like to thank those who have made a memorial donation in the past year in honor of their loved ones. The following were so honored in 2016:

Bob Nunes	Tina Nelson
Dan Callahan	Dick Brann
Frances Furguson	John Abel
John Abel	Elaine Olson Hamilton
Victor “Bud” Kroutch	



**HAMBURGER
FEED
May 22nd**

DESSERTS NEEDED

