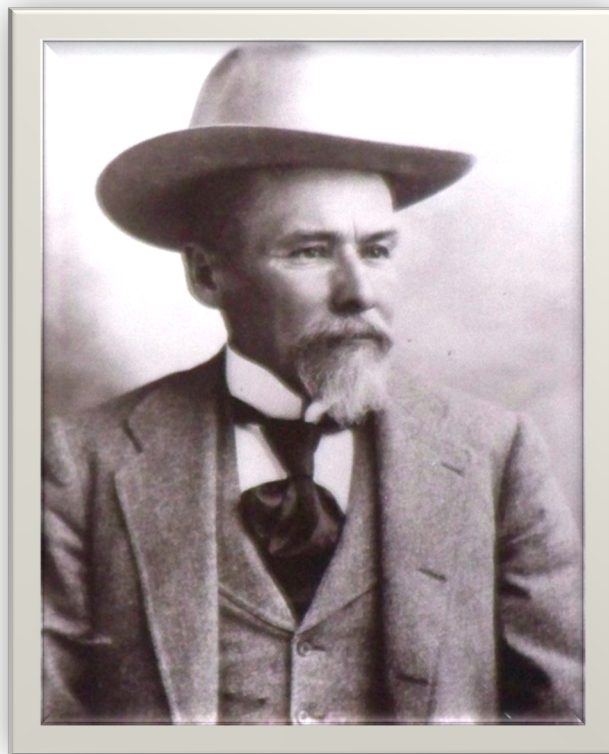


## **John Horton Slaughter**

John H. Slaughter was born on October 2, 1841, in Sabine Parish, Louisiana, to Benjamin and Minerva (Mabry) Slaughter. When he was three months old the family moved to Caldwell County, Texas. At the age of fourteen the family moved near San Antonio, living in Frio and Atascosa Counties. He grew up in an era where his friends and neighbors were fighting Comanche and Kiowa Indians. Just prior to the Civil War, he joined the Texas Rangers with Captain John Files Tom's company to fight the Comanche. On March 29, 1862, he enlisted in the Confederate Army with Company E of Colonel Peter C. Woods' Thirty-second Texas Cavalry under Captain Lewis Antonio Maverick. In 1864, he was sent home because of illness, believed to have been tuberculosis. Upon his recovery, he returned to service with the Third Frontier Division, Texas State Troops. While serving with this group he earned the reputation of a fearless fighter and a skilled gunman. After the war, John and his brothers realized that Texas cattle had been running wild during the war and reproducing at a rapid rate. They formed the San Antonio Ranch Company and were among the first to drive cattle up the Chisholm Trail. On August 4, 1871, he married Eliza Adeline Harris. They had four children, two boys and two girls, and the middle boy and girl both died as infants. Eliza contracted smallpox on her way to join John in Arizona and died shortly after reaching Phoenix in 1877. On April 16, 1879, John married eighteen year-old Cora Viola Howell in Tularosa, New Mexico. Despite the nineteen years in age difference the marriage lasted over forty years.

John was not a particularly imposing figure physically as he only stood five feet six inches tall. He did, however, have a thick neck, broad shoulders, and a head of dark hair, beard, and moustache. It was also said that he had the most piercing eyes ever seen. He carried a pearl handled pistol that had no notches and he did not confirm or deny that he had killed twenty men.



**John H Slaughter**

By the late 1870s, John felt that Texas was fast becoming overcrowded and in 1879 he drove a herd of cattle into Arizona. He and the Howells, his in-laws, settled in the Sulphur Springs area because nearby Tombstone was booming. He had a contract to supply beef to the San Carlos Indian Reservation, so he dispatched his cowboys back to Texas to bring another herd of cattle. He also started a wholesale and retail meat market in Charleston that he named the Wholesale & Retail Meat Market. A typical story in his life occurred when he realized that he was losing cattle and the notorious Old Man Clanton and his sons owned a ranch adjacent to his. One day he found Old Man on his property and he told him, "If I ever catch you on my land again I'll kill you." The Clantons never entered his land again and his cattle quit disappearing.

Cochise County was being overrun by thieves, murderers, and rustlers and the citizens drafted John to run for sheriff. Slaughter was elected on the Democratic ticket in 1866 and then reelected in 1888. His efforts to eliminate crime and criminals during his two terms earned him the distinction of being one of Arizona's outstanding lawmen. He also earned a reputation of being judge, jury, and executioner. It was said that he often told his deputies to shoot first, then yell throw up your hands afterward. One thing he really hated was a horse thief and on many occasions he was known to bring back a stolen horse, but somehow the horse thief always managed to disappear. He hired many good, honest men as his deputies, but one hire that he came to regret in later years was Albert "Burt" Alvord. As long as Burt served John he was loyal to him and the public. But later he became one of Arizona's most notorious bad men. Burt served in other capacities as a lawman, but used his office to plan stage and train robberies. When John left the office Cochise County was more law abiding than it had ever been and the citizen's effort to draft him for a third term was vetoed by Viola.



**John Horton's San Bernardino Ranch house**

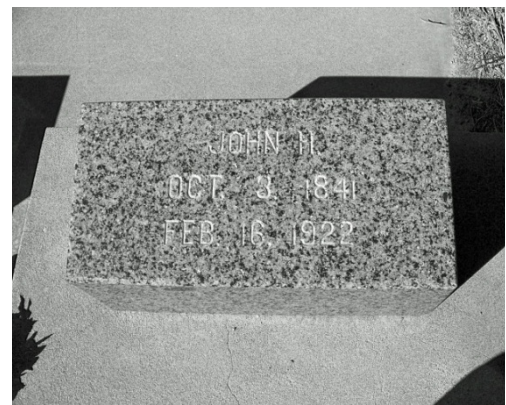
John moved his family to the San Bernardino Ranch that he had acquired in 1884. The ranch was an old Mexican land grant of several thousand acres in the southeast corner of Arizona and a large portion of it extended into Mexico. Through

purchases and leases of adjacent land he built a cattle empire that ran thousands of heads over a quarter million acres. The ranch was, and is, a beautiful site with two rivers flowing through it and several springs near the home site. When drilling for a well, an underground source of water was discovered with an unlimited supply. By damming one of the springs a lake of one acre was developed. The home site has a fantastic view into both old and New Mexico. In 1890, some groups of Apache Indians were still fleeing the San Carlos Reservation to kill whites and raid ranches in southern Arizona and Mexico. In May of 1890, Slaughter received word that a band of Apaches had stolen some of his herd, killed some white people and were hiding in the mountains just over the border in Mexico. He contacted the Army, and a small troop of soldiers and scouts joined John and some of his ranch hands in tracking the renegades. They found them in a canyon, but were unable to surprise them and the Indians melted into the wilderness. They did abandon all their food, captured loot, and some of the stolen horses, including Viola's mare, Dixie. While searching one of the wickiups, John discovered a little girl about one year old. He took her home, named her Apache May for the month he found her, and adopted her as one of his own. The other young children soon shortened her name to "Patchy." She was loved by everyone and loved everyone, but John was her favorite and she tried to follow him everywhere. On a cold February evening in 1890 the children were playing around a fire when Patchy's dress caught on fire. Before an adult could catch her and smother the flames more than half her body was burned. It took more than eight hours for the doctor to reach the ranch and there was nothing he could do for her. After suffering through the night she died in the early morning.

John's health began to fail him again in late 1921 and early in the morning of February, 16, 1922 he passed away. Viola survived him by several years and she joined him on April 1, 1941. They are buried side-by-side in the Calvary Cemetery in Douglas, Arizona.



**John and Viola's Plot**



**John Horton's Head**

