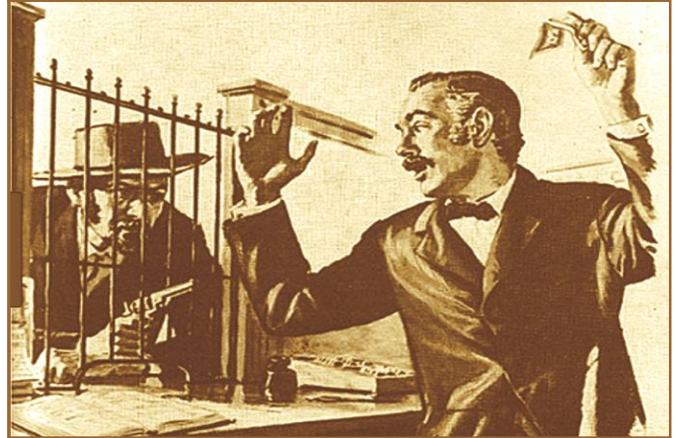


The Great San Marcial Bank Robbery

SCHS was recently contacted by historian David John Taylor of San Diego, California. He is researching an outlaw named Taylor, possibly a distant relative, that robbed the San Marcial Bank in 1892. Since so little history is known about San Marcial, other than the 1929 flood, this was an incident we had little knowledge of. It obviously peaked our curiosity. David Taylor was very gracious in sharing his research and knowledge about the bank robbery and the young outlaw prior to the publication of his book, for which we extend our sincere thanks. Plus we did some research of our own.

Here is the previously unknown San Marcial story.



In 1880, the Santa Fe railroad arrived at the small village of San Marcial and transformed the area into a bustling railroad town. "New Town," as it was called, grew with people, railroad workers and merchants. One of those merchants was Jasper Broyles¹, opening a grocery and furniture store in 1886. The railroad made an arrangement with Broyles to build a bank into his store to safeguard their growing payroll. Businesses serving as a bank was common practice at the time.

Broyles built the small bank in the corner of his store and installed a large fire-proof safe behind the single "cashier" window. San Marcial finally had a bank, opening for business in June 1892. It quickly became popular with not only the railroad, but area residents from Valverde to the Rosedale mines.

• THE ROBBERY •

On November 23, 1892 around sundown, Jasper Broyles and six men were huddled around the store's stove, staying warm from the chilly autumn evening air. A lone gunman entered the store; the scarf across his face hid his identity. Waving his pistol, he ordered the six men to stand against the wall, handed a bag to Broyles, and ordered him to fill it with cash. Suddenly,

a customer entered the store, identified as Bass Allen. With the point of a gun, Allen was directed to stand against the wall with the other six men.

What happened next is not precisely known. Perhaps the unexpected customer spooked the robber to hurry up and finish the job. The masked man retrieved the bag Broyles was filling with cash and noticed a pile of coins. In an absent-minded act, he removed his mask to wrap up the coins on his way out the door.

Some accounts claim Broyles filled his bag with money from the cash drawers only, never opening the safe. This may be true, as it was reported he had two guns of his own in the safe to use just in case of a holdup. Had he opened the safe, he would have likely used one of the pistols to defend his bank. After all, the robber was outnumbered seven-to-one at this point, the hostages just waiting for the right moment to make their move. It is not known if any of the other men were armed, or if they were ordered to disarm².

Regardless, the robber took his booty and escaped into the night without a shot being fired. The amount of money stolen was reported to be somewhere between \$900 and \$1,500 — not a large haul considering the amount of money and railroad payroll likely in the safe³.

¹ Jasper Newton Broyles arrived in San Marcial 1881 as a ticket agent and telegrapher for the Santa Fe railroad; in 1883 he started a freight delivery service before starting his grocery store in 1886. By 1908, he had also built a pharmacy, a grist mill and the electric light company for San Marcial, becoming one of the town's most prominent citizens. He died in El Paso 1938 at age 78.

² In 1886, New Mexico passed "An Act to Prohibit the Unlawful Carrying and Use of Deadly Weapons." By 1892, "packing a gun" in public was falling out of favor, and firearms were not allowed on railroad property. The hostages may have been unarmed.

³ In 1894, Broyle's bank was listed as having \$25,000 in deposits and \$20,000 monthly railroad payroll on hand.

Broyles, and the seven other men, were criticized for not taking any action to overpower the robber. They answered that the lone gunman appeared to be no novice and decided best to comply.

Broyles did not know the man by name, but when he removed his mask to carry off the coins, he was recognized by the men as a familiar face seen around town with a reputation for being a "bad man."

• **HOT ON THE TRAIL** •

Socorro Deputy Sheriff William Goodwin (or Goodwyn) responded to the bank robbery. It is not known if he was the resident deputy for San Marcial, or arrived from Socorro later.⁴

From the description provided by the hostages, Deputy Goodwin seemed to know the ruffian to be outlaw James Taylor, possibly alias Billy Fox, alias Will Mason, and perhaps a host of others. Western historian John Tanner Jr., and others, also identify him as outlaw Newt Harold, originally from Missouri. We'll refer to him as "James Taylor."

Deputy Goodwin tracked Taylor to south of town about two miles where he had spent the night. This was probably the home of family or friends in the village of Contadero. From there, the trail continued down the Rio Grande to Cuchillo Negro where Taylor headed west towards Luna — obviously fleeing to Arizona. Goodwin stayed on his trail. Once in Arizona, Taylor was tracked to Springerville and through St. Johns with an obvious trek to Holbrook. Then, the trail went cold. Unbeknownst to Goodwin, Taylor had veered to the south where he hunkered down for a few days in the town of Snowflake, south of Holbrook.

Loosing the trail, Goodwin continued on to Holbrook, the county seat of Apache county.⁵ There he found the sheriff's office to be a bit "short staffed" with Sheriff O.B. Little recuperating from an injury and the undersheriff unavailable. He met with William Nathaniel "Nat" Greer, the temporary acting Sheriff.

Presumably with an arrest warrant in hand,⁶ the two lawmen discussed the matter. Greer seemed eager to help. In turn, Greer telegraphed nearby communities with the description of the wanted man.

An answer from the small community of Snowflake indicated a stranger in town seemed to match the description using the name Will Mason (Mason being Taylor's middle name). Arriving a day or two earlier, the stranger was easily spotted in the small Mormon town as being well armed with a good mount and plenty of money.

Apparently, James Taylor was no stranger to Greer or Sheriff Little, the San Marcial bank robber also suspected of crimes across Apache County.

The closest thing to a lawman in Snowflake was

30-year old Justice of the Peace Charles L. Flake, the son of one of the town's founders.⁷ Greer sent a telegram to Flake informing him the stranger he identified was suspected of robbing a bank in San Marcial, New Mexico Territory. Sheriffs Goodwin and Greer would soon be enroute to Snowflake.

In the meantime, the telegram requested

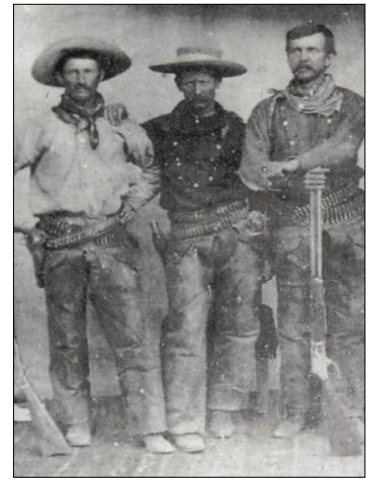


Photo: Greer Family Genealogy
Cowhands on the Greer ranch near St. Johns 1888, Nat Greer in the center.



Photo: Flake Family Genealogy
Charles L. Flake and wife Cristabell (Hunt) Flake.

⁴ Little information on Deputy Goodwin exists in Socorro County records, though his involvement in this incident is well documented in period newspapers. San Marcial was an unincorporated town with no requirements to keep municipal records.

⁵ Apache county was divided to form Navajo county in 1895. Holbrook is now county seat of Navajo county.

⁶ Historic arrest warrant records exist for Socorro County; the search for this warrant is ongoing for evidence of the legal name used for the outlaw by Deputy Goodwin and the judge issuing the warrant.

⁷ The unusual named town was founded by Mormon missionaries Erastus Snow and William Flake, and called the Snow-Flake settlement, shortened to Snowflake in later years.

Flake to arrest and hold the stranger and await their arrival. Greer continued with a description of Taylor: "Upper lip curled up slightly. Small keen black eyes. Has Winchester forty-six and no scabbard. Has white handled six-shooter, forty five, always carries it in waistband of trousers and shoots left handed."

Two years previous, Taylor and his younger brother, then going by the names Billy and Frank Fox, stole three horses in Arizona. On March 31, 1890, a posse caught up with the two on a cattle drive in Carrizo canyon near San Diego. The Arizona deputy sheriff disarmed Frank Fox by grabbing the pistol out of his scabbard. A scuffle ensued resulting in Frank being shot in the back.

Billy (James Taylor) watched as his brother fell to the ground – dead – at only 15 years old.⁸ For that reason, Taylor never used a scabbard again, always carrying his revolver in his trousers. James



Photo: Dave Taylor and Jon Larson
The grave of Frank Fox in Carrizo canyon, killed for being a horse thief. Frank was the brother to James Taylor, the San Marcial bank robber.

Taylor, the surviving brother, was arrested for his role in stealing the horses. He was found guilty of grand larceny and sent to the Arizona Penitentiary at Yuma on June 15, 1890 under the name of William Fox, prisoner #0664.⁹

• DEADLY PURSUIT •

Greer concludes his telegram to Justice of the Peace Charles Flake with a warning: "He is a dangerous man. Be sure to have assistance enough to arrest him, if he is the party wanted. You will be paid one hundred dollars if he is the man."

On December 8, 1892, heeding the warning, Charles solicited the help of his brother, James. The two normally unarmed men went to their homes for their guns. They found the wanted man where they suspected, at Mrs. Hall's boarding house, only a few

houses away from Charles Flake's house. The two brothers approached Taylor and engaged him in simple conversation, noting his white handled six-shooter in his trousers and other features as described by Greer in the telegram. After a little chit-chat and convinced he was the wanted man, Charles informed him he had the authority to arrest him for suspicion of bank robbery in New Mexico.

The two inexperienced brothers were no doubt stunned as Taylor instantly drew his pistol and shot at James, grazing his ear. Less than a heart-beat later, Taylor swung around and shot Charles through the neck. James responded by shooting Taylor, the bullet ripping through his mouth. James shot again, striking Taylor in the head, killing him instantly. All this at close range in a matter of a second or two.

At Taylor's side lay his pistol, with seven notches carved into the white pearl handle. One of those notches was supposedly for killing his own brother when James Taylor was only 13.

The sound of several gunshots in the quiet town did not go unnoticed. Several people arrived to see what all the commotion was about, seeing James tending to his bloody brother. With the help of several, they carried Charles Flake to his home, where he later succumbed to his wounds, leaving a wife and four children.

That evening, Deputy Goodwin and acting Sheriff Greer arrived in Snowflake and learned the news, inquiring what went wrong. There was plenty of blame to go around. Greer, with little law enforcement experience, should never have asked Charles Flake to confront a known outlaw killer. They could have simply kept an eye on Taylor until the two lawmen arrived. And the fault of the Flake brothers? In their servitude to their community, they naively had no idea who they were up against.

• BACK TO SAN MARCIAL •

Deputy Goodwin took Jim Taylor's body to Holbrook to board the train back to New Mexico. Arriving in San Marcial, Jasper Broyles and several of the hostages identified the dead man as the bank robber – no doubt a huge relief to Deputy Goodwin.

⁸ See "The Killing of Frank Fox" by Dave Taylor at: <http://www.authorsden.com/visit/viewarticle.asp?id=68705>

⁹ Perhaps due to his young age, James Taylor (Wm. Fox) was pardoned by Gov. Irwin and released from Yuma on April 10, 1891.

Goodwin had searched Taylor's body, belongings, and his boarding house room, finding no money save \$12 and some change. Some believed he may have buried the money somewhere along his trail down the Rio Grande anticipating a return. If such is the case, that money is now underneath Elephant Butte Reservoir. On the other hand, Flake reported he seemed to have "plenty of money" during his stay in Snowflake. Regardless, the stolen bank money was never recovered.

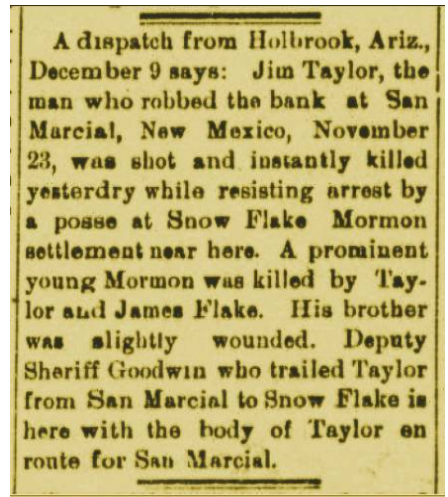
It is reported that the San Marcial bank robber was buried at San Marcial, likely in the predominantly Protestant Mason Cemetery. With no money and no known or reported family, Deputy Goodwin probably had him buried in the "pauper graves" at the cemetery, likely with only a small wooden marker, if one at all.

• NEVER ENDING STORY •

Though James Taylor was killed and buried 126 years ago, there still remains mysteries about the outlaw – the reason SCHS was contacted by author David Taylor. Mainly, what was the true identity of the bank robber? Was he from Missouri, was his legal name William Fox, James Taylor, or something else?

To assist the author, SCHS members Peggy Hardman and Paul Harden conducted some local research with few results. None of the assumed names are listed on the known cemetery records; a visit to the San Marcial cemetery revealed no grave; death records at the

Socorro County Courthouse begin in 1904; arrest warrants are archived in several places, though not yet located. All period newspaper stories of the event refer to the rogue outlaw as James Taylor and the name Deputy Goodwin knew him by. Therefore, we can only assume that was the name he was known by – and died by – in this previously unknown story.



One of the newspaper reports of the San Marcial robber, clearly identified as Jim Taylor, as reported in the Sierra County Advocate (Kingston, NM) Dec. 16, 1892



Today's view of the San Marcial Masonic Cemetery.



Most of the cemetery, scarcely used since the 1929 flood, has fallen into disrepair. Most of the old wooden markers are no longer readable.



An area in many cemeteries is set aside for the "pauper graves." At San Marcial, it appears the south side, where rotted wood markers or stones, overgrown with bushes, are all that indicate grave sites.

