

William Rafferty

William Rafferty was born about 1840 in Ireland.¹ He probably immigrated to America in the 1850s and was naturalized 12 October 1859 in Amador, California.² On the 1870 census, William is listed as a liquor dealer, living in a hotel in Corinne City, Box Elder, Utah Territory.³ Corinne was founded in 1869 as the railroads approached their historic meeting place at Promontory Summit. It boasted fifteen saloons and sixteen liquor stores.⁴ He was registered as a voter in Alpine County, California, in 1873 and 1875.⁵

William married Allison Amelia “Alice” Edwards about 1875 in Utah Territory; they had three children.⁶ In 1880, William was a saloon keeper in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory. He was living with his wife, two children, a nephew, and three other men.⁷ His business was the Capital saloon, advertised to have the finest brands of liquor and cigars, a billiard table, and a card room.⁸

William was murdered in 1882 by an angry customer. Here is the story of his death: Herbert Steele had just been fired as the senior editor of the *Silver Reef Miner* newspaper.⁹ He had retired to Capital Saloon¹⁰ for a night of drinking, about eleven-thirty¹¹ on 4 February 1882. The bar tender, Johnny Quillen¹², refused to extend him credit for a drink.¹³ Herbert was quarrelsome and “heaped considerable abuse on him” until Quillen struck him in the face.¹⁴

Quillen’s version of the incident stated, “I called Steele back and told him we were not in the habit of keeping accounts and that we did not do a credit business. He then told me he did not owe me more than a half dollar; some words passed between us, and he said that I had acted the ... with him about that fifty cents – this was repeated three or four times. I finally told him I think I am pretty near as good a man as you are. He said, that may be, but you treated me like a I then struck him in the face, he kind of staggered back, and I was following him up when I heard the report of a pistol. I rushed in on him and tried to get the pistol from him, and several of the boys got around him.”¹⁵

Bar tender “William Rafferty, who was nearby, told Herbert to put up his gun, and remarked that he wouldn’t shoot anybody. Steele replied, ‘The hell I wouldn’t.’ and pointing the pistol at Rafferty, fired. The ball entered in front of the right shoulder and ranged towards the heart, causing death in a few minutes. Quillen would have shot Herbert on the spot, but was prevented by one of the bystanders grasping his pistol”.¹⁶

¹ United States Census, 1880.

² California Voter Registers, 1866-1898.

³ United States Census, 1870.

⁴ *Wikipedia*: Corinne, Utah.

⁵ California Voter Registers, 1866-1898.

⁶ *Familysearch.org*

⁷ United States Census, 1880.

⁸ *Silver Reef Miner*, 5 November 1881, p. 1.

⁹ A Historical Study of Silver Reef, by Alfred Bleak Stucki, 1966, p. 64.

¹⁰ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

¹¹ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

¹² John P Quillen was born 1857 in California; of Irish descent.

¹³ *The Montana Standard*, 8 February 1882, p. 7; *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Silver Reef Miner*, 4 February 1882.

¹⁶ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

Rafferty died within a few minutes.¹⁷ Herbert was immediately seized and jailed, and strongly guarded for the dual purpose of preventing his escape and protecting him from the fury of the excited citizens.¹⁸ News of the murder was widely reported, including Rafferty's wife's family in Salt Lake City.¹⁹

Excitement was high and there was talk of lynching.²⁰ "James Lynch stood on an improvised platform on the running gears of a wagon. He called to mind the many murders that had been committed and that the courts and jurors had failed to give justice, that the time had come when the people must take the law in their own hands if justice was to prevail. The crowd had become a mob crying, "Hang him! Hang him!" when Capt. Henry Lubbeck, general manager of the Christy Mining and Milling Co., dashed up on his pacer. The crowd parted and Capt. Lubbeck sprang from his horse to the platform and faced Lynch. Silence reigned. Capt. Lubbeck, an aristocrat of the South, faced a younger and much larger man, but Lynch blanched under the Captain's piercing gaze and sat down on the coil of rope without a word when Capt. Lubbeck shouted, "Sit down!" The captain, in a few short ringing sentences, urged the people to commit no rash act that would disgrace them and the camp, but to stand for law and order. Father Galligan then jumped to the platform. He was tall, slender, and bent. His eyes flashed as he spoke with impassioned eloquence, urging the people to do no murder. As the crowd was melting away John Fortmann led out toward the jail, calling out, "All in favor of hanging come this way!" But less than a score followed him.²¹

Herbert was tried for murder in the second district court in Beaver, Utah. Gibson Clark²² was his defending attorney. Herbert testified that he drew his pistol while staggering back from the attack by Quillen and it accidentally discharged.²³ It appears he shot at Quillen and then turned and mortally wounded Rafferty.²⁴ The jury found him guilty of voluntary manslaughter. The motion for a new trial was denied.²⁵ He was sentenced to prison for four years by Judge Stephen P. Twiss²⁶ He served his time in prison in Beaver, Utah.²⁷

William Rafferty, the deceased, had been a saloon keeper in Silver Reef for years, and was a peaceful, inoffensive man who had the respect of all who knew him. He left a widow and three little children.²⁸ Funeral services were held three days later at the Catholic Church in Silver Reef.²⁹

¹⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8

¹⁸ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

¹⁹ *Oakland Tribune*, 4 February 1882, p. 2; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 Feb 1882, p. 4-5; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Vol 14, No 142, 4 February 1882.

²⁰ *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²¹ *Memories of Silver Reef*, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, Vol 3, No 4, p. 108; see also *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8; *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²² Gibson Clark was admitted to the Utah Bar in 1880, and later served as an attorney and judge in Wyoming (*Wyoming Tribune*, 15 December 1914, pp. 1-2).

²³ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8; *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²⁴ *Memories of Silver Reef*, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, Vol 3, No 4, p. 108.

²⁵ *Deseret News*, 24 May 1882.

²⁶ Stephen P Twiss was an associate justice of the second district in Utah in 1882 (*History of the Bench and Bar of Utah*, 1913, p. 65). An interesting note is that around the same time, Judge Twiss was supportive of the movement to have women vote in Utah.

²⁷ *Southern Utah Memories: Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864-1994*.

²⁸ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 February 1882, p. 8; *Deseret News*, 8 February 1882, p. 44; *The Record-Union* [Sacramento], 4 February 1882, p. 8.

²⁹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 10 February 1882, p. 8.

Alice remarried about 1885 and had another daughter. They lived in Salt Lake City until she was widowed and moved to Franklin, Ada, Idaho.³⁰ She died in 1933 in Idaho and was buried there.³¹ After William's death, the Capitol Saloon was owned by J H Cassidy.³²

Cabinet Saloon,
Opposite the Harrison House.

William Rafferty.....Proprietor

THIS SALOON HAS JUST BEEN opened, and is the finest accounted establishment in Silver Reef. None but the very finest brands of Liquors and Cigars will be furnished to customers, and a trial will prove my assertion true.

The finest billiard table in Silver Reef. The Card Room is neat and comfortable, and the enjoyment of customers will be the greatest aim.

Silver Reef, October 15, 1881.

(Image from the *Silver Reef Miner*, 5 November 1881, p. 1).

Research by Elaine Young, Silver Reef Foundation historian, 2016
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³⁰ United States Census, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930.

³¹ Idaho Death Certificates, 1911-1937.

³² *Silver Reef Miner*, 30 September 1882, p. 1.