

Guilty or Not Guilty

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In the summer of 1860, John (or Jim) Laughlin and Pat Devlin owned a ranch northwest of Colorado City (later known as the Pope Ranch). Problems arose in the partnership between Laughlin and Devlin, resulting in the two men becoming enemies. Each man began watching for the other and planning to kill the other if the opportunity presented itself. It soon did. While both men were in town one day, Laughlin saw Devlin walking down the street. Laughlin hid around the corner of a building and when Devlin walked by, Laughlin shot Devlin with a double-barreled shotgun. The shot seriously wounded Devlin. After examining Devlin's wounds, the town's citizens concluded that Devlin was going to die immediately; so the town arrested Laughlin for murder. Having quickly gathered themselves together, the citizens shared responsibilities for conducting a trial. For example, Anthony Bott brought his construction crew down from working on Ute Pass to act as jurors. After hearing witness testimony and all of the evidence, the citizens acquitted Laughlin of the shooting by stepping to the side of the street designated for a "not guilty" verdict. Devlin died two weeks later.¹