



A Series of Unfortunate Events

Usually we have pleasant, fairly predictable interactions with the animals in our lives – cute fuzzy kittens, faithful dogs, happy little guppies. But if you go back just a few generations, our predecessors had to deal with much larger animals on a regular basis – and it didn't always go well. Today we'll meet a few of the people interred at East Union Cemetery who met their end in tragic ways.

Any method of transportation can be annoying – the car won't start, the train's late, your bike has a flat tire. Mr. P.F. Lambert would have happily traded those annoyances for his team of horses, which evidently got spooked and ran away with him. When the horses bolted he ended up with a broken shoulder, among other injuries, which led to his death. Mr. Lambert was one of the first directors of the South San Joaquin Irrigation District in 1924, and owned a fair amount of land, being well known as a vinyardest. I'm sure he would be amazed at the size and scope of the vineyards and wineries still here in Manteca.

Percy Beswick, 23, faced a different problem as he watered mules at the Ed Wolfe ranch on a blustery day in the winter of 1916. Suddenly the wind came up, blew his overcoat open, and frightened one of the mules enough that it wheeled and kicked Percy in the stomach. He didn't think his injuries were very serious, as he could walk and wasn't in too much pain. But when he felt worse the next day Dr. Goodale was summoned – Percy had internal injuries. He died two days later, on Christmas morning, shortly after drinking a cup of water. Mules have an innate sense of self-preservation, much to the detriment of Percy Beswick.

When I was a little girl my dad had cows, and one ornery old bull - I was warned to stay far away from that pen. Durward Graves knew bulls needed to be corralled safely, and was headed out to repair the corral where he kept his bull. Sadly, as he carried the lumber needed for the repair, the bull attacked. Mr. Graves fought bravely, even managing to grab a pitchfork to defend himself, but the tines just bent against the enraged bull's tough hide, and he succumbed to his injuries. He was the son of Constable J.W. Graves, part of a large local family, and well-loved – his funeral, in 1924, was attended by one of the largest crowds ever seen at the cemetery.

To end on a happier note, the last large animal was much more docile – she was just a little bit lost. In 1921 a Holstein cow wandered onto the ranch of Manuel Silveira, and, when Mrs. Eva Gustafson tried to go and bring her home, Mr. Silveira claimed the cow belonged to his herd. They went to trial to settle the matter, and appeared before Constable J.W. Graves – yes, Durward's father. With a Solomon-like request, the constable asked Mrs. Gustafson to approach the Holstein. The cow evidently had a good memory for faces, and allowed Mrs. Gustafson to pet her, while neither Mr. Silveira nor the constable could get anywhere near. The cow was delivered to Mrs. Gustafson.

If there's a moral to this story, it's to give the animals in your life respect, love, and maybe, a wide berth.