



Image © Anne Fletcher, author of *From the Mill to Monte Carlo*.

Joseph Hobson Jagger

Joseph Hobson Jagger was born in Shelf on 2nd September 1830. He was an ambitious man and, after being in several partnerships in the textile industry, by the age of 30 he was in business on his own, first in Manningham and later in Manchester. Joseph married in August 1851 and by 1860 had 4 children. Unfortunately the textile boom of the 1850's petered out and by 1860 he was in severe financial difficulties.

Faced with ruin Joseph came up with a plan to go to the Casino in Monte Carlo with the intention of winning enough to solve his problems. None of the many 'systems' to try to beat the casino had worked. However, Joseph had become aware of the construction of the roulette tables and, having worked for many years in the textile industry, was fully aware of the problems in balancing rotating equipment and was convinced that this would likely mean that there would be a bias on where the wheel would stop.

Along with two trusted friends Joseph went to Monte Carlo and they observed the roulette wheels. Working separately they watched the wheels and memorised the sequence of positions in which the wheels stopped. Later, in their lodgings, they analysed the results looking for a bias and eventually identified one wheel which did have one. This was the wheel he played on his winnings were so large that the croupier had to bring out a black cloth to cover the roulette wheel and declare the bank broken !

After a while Joseph was unable to win and soon realised that the casino had moved the wheels around between tables. Some days later, having again identified the wheel he wanted, Joseph was winning again! However, consultations between the wheel manufacturer and the casino had led them to identify the probable way Joseph was winning and an urgent design change to the wheel brought an end to Joseph's method.

Nevertheless, Joseph returned to England with the present day equivalent of some £7.5M thus ending his financial problems and allowing him to see out his days in comfort. He died in April 1892 and is buried in the graveyard of the Bethel Chapel in Shelf truly having been

The Man Who Broke The Bank At Monte Carlo