

**THE CALIFORNIA WHITE CAP MURDERS IN THE 1890s
BECAME INFAMOUS SIMPLY BECAUSE THE
PERPERTRATORS WORE HOODS OVER THEIR HEADS.
THESE MURDERS TOOK PLACE SOUTH OF
MIDDLETOWN, LAKE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
MIDDLETOWN SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A TYPICAL
MINING TOWN**

SPACE

CINNABAR

The Saga of the White Cap Murders



By: Bill Wink



A Mine

“The existence of a "mine" is not known until ore has been extracted to give it a value. Until then it is a "prospect," and the mere existence of shafts, tunnels, etc., no matter how extensive, is not evidence of a valuable mine. In other words a vein is a work of nature; a mine is the result of the work of man in disclosing the mineral contained in the vein.”

Charles G. Yale

DEDICATION

In memory of:

Mrs. Helen Rocca Goss

Had She Not Preserved History, This Story Could Not Have Been Told.

CINNABAR

THE SAGA OF THE WHITE CAP MURDERS

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Middletown, A Mining Town, 1875

Middletown, California; as described in the newspaper, the Sonoma Democrat on February 27th, 1875. This was written just four years after Middletown was founded in 1871.

“MIDDLETOWN—ITS PROSPERITY.

We had occasion last week to take a trip across the mountains into Loconoma Valley, Lake county. One year ago we visited the same locality and the present site of the town of Middletown had only three or four houses.

MIDDLETOWN TO-DAY

Is a town of not less than 700 population. There are four general merchandise stores, owned by the following parties: Geo. M. Sacry, formerly a merchant of Healdsburg, in this county; D. Lobree Co., and Mr. Barnes, are in the same line of business; Mr. Summerland has a hardware store. There are two hotels, the

Pioneer, owned by C. M. Young, and the Middletown Hotel, owned by Mr. Shirley. Mr. Young has the brick on the ground for a

TWO-STORY BRICK HOTEL

Which will contain thirty bedrooms, beside parlor, dining-room, kitchen, etc. This structure will be a credit to the valley and town. Mr. C. M. Young, the proprietor, is an enterprising man and we wish him great success. Besides the two hotels there are two restaurants one owned by H. M. Taylor, brother of John S. Taylor, of Santa Rosa, the other by Mr. White. There are two livery stables—the Pioneer, owned by C. M. Young, and the Fashion, by E. J. Cassidy. Two butcher shops do a large business each. Gwinn, Burger & Co. own one and Barnes & Canon, the other. Being in a mining district the blacksmithing business is extensive. Four shops keep busy. Kellogg & Branston own one, John Windham another, John Reineke a third, and A. Newcome, the fourth. Daniel Cord does a good business as gunsmith. The benevolent societies are well represented. A hall is owned by the

ODD FELLOWS

In the principal business part of the town. The Lodge, though recently chartered, has thirty members. For the ensuing term the following officers have been elected and installed: M Kerr. N. G.; L. Wilkinson, V.G.; Geo. Rawson R. B.; Wm. P. Berry, P. S.; Geo. Farley, Treasurer. The Masons held a preliminary meeting for the purpose of organizing a Lodge, last week. There is a very large Lodge of Good Templars in Middletown. Its officers are: John Soper, W. C.; Mrs. Susie Wallace, W. V.; W. Caps, Sec.; H. Stockford, F. S.; Geo. Farley, Treasurer. The

GUENOC GRANGE

Meets in Middletown every week. Mr. T. C. Soper is Muster. The Grange is in a flourishing condition.

Since last October thirty new houses have been put up in Middletown. There will be a large number of new building commenced as soon as the spring opens. Our readers would doubtless like to know the foundations for all this prosperity. We answer,

THE MINES

The town is situated in Lake Mining District, in which are embraced some of the richest quicksilver mines yet developed in Lake county, the most prominent of which is the

GREAT WESTERN

Four miles distant, which employs 15 white men and 150 Chinamen. This mine is owned by Green, Brewster & Co., of San Francisco. They have two furnaces in full blast and a third in course of construction. The Great Western ships 130 flasks of quicksilver every week. Mr. Clark, the former efficient Superintendent of the Sonoma mine, is Superintendent. Seven miles from Middletown is the

AMERICAN MINE,

Owned by Capt. Wright and brothers, of Pioneer steamship fame. They work ninety Mexicans. The mine is shipping 40 flasks per week. It is superintended by Capt. Wright in person. Beside these there is the KEARSARGE, J. C. Hanscom, President, T. C. Cutlar, Superintendent, distant eight miles, working 20 Chinamen; the WALL STREET, six miles distant, working five white men and 20 Chinamen; the COLUMBIA, owned by same parties as the Great Western. The HERCULES, PILOT KNOB, and several other mines are working a considerable force of men. The mines supply a home market for all the agricultural products produced in the valley at a price better than can be had in San Francisco. Stevens & Jessup, of San Francisco, have purchased the mill property formerly owned by J. M. Davis, three miles north of the town. They are putting up a new flouring mill, two run of stones, which will be in full operation this spring. Two and a half miles west of the Great Western mine Is located the

AMERICAN SAW MILL

Owned by J. M. Davis, County Supervisor from the Middletown District, and Mr. Aimsbury. It has a capacity of 8000 feet per day. The mines purchase all the lumber they can produce. Lake Mining District will undoubtedly be one of the most populous and wealthy in this whole region of country.”

FOREWARD

Middletown, with its beginning in 1871, became a place of commerce because it was a stage stop. This stage stop, called Middle Station, was located where the road to the County Seat and the road to Clear Lake separated after arriving from the south and Napa county. The road to Clear Lake continued north and the road to the County Seat went west passing over the foothills of Cobb Mountain dropping down into the Big Valley and then on to Lakeport, the County Seat.

Middletown was also where visitors going to the various hot springs resorts caught their connecting transportation. But it cannot be overlooked, that very early on, Middletown became a mining town too, providing much needed goods and services to the mines and their employees.

Middletown got its name because it was located at the half-way point between the northernmost town in Napa county, Calistoga, and the most southern end of Clear Lake.

To reach Middletown from Napa county, one must make the trek over the second highest peak in the Mayacamas Mountain Range, Mount Saint Helena, which in earlier years was a daunting, sometimes terrifying trip by stagecoach always made with the knowledge that the route was infamous for highwaymen holding up the stage and its passengers.

One such highway-man was Black Bart, the gentleman bandit, another was a local boy, Lawrence Buchanen "Buck" English, who was younger, brasher and more dangerous. But even after the days of the stagecoaches it was still a trek by motorized coach. Currently, the road is tremendously improved, but it still remains a sizable impediment to travelers who want to journey to Lake county from Napa county.

The cinnabar boom was first fed by the discovery of gold and silver in the western states as mercury was used in the processing. Then it boomed again during WWI and then again during WWII as mercury was used in munitions.

In the mid-to-late 1800s, settlers to this area discovered what the Native Americans had known for centuries, hot springs were dotted throughout the foothills of Cobb Mountain, bubbling up through the earth at varying temperatures and with varying mineral make-up, the result of this, the development of several hot springs resorts offering curing hot mineral baths and elixirs of bottled mineral water.

This made Lake County California a vacation destination from about the mid-1880s on into the early 1960s. First were those attracted to Clear Lake and what it offered and later were those attracted to all the hot springs and other summer resorts around the county. The 1930s, 40s and 50s saw Clear Lake draw thousands of summer vacationers, as did all the resorts in southern Lake county and elsewhere. Every summer there was a huge population explosion in the entire county.

But by the late 1950s many people's ideas of where and how to spend their vacation time had changed, therefore, many Lake county resorts, that had little to offer their guests, were closing down or finding a new purpose.

So Middletown has experienced the economic rollercoaster of mercury mining, a fairly long spell of resort activities, that was unfortunately only seasonal and the latest boom was the development of the largest geo-thermal field in the world, that once developed, now only requires employees for maintenance and operation.

Through all of this; Middletown burned in 1918, 1930 and again in 2015 and lost its local anchor store, Hardester's Market, to fire, Memorial Day 2018.

The hot springs resorts, the cinnabar mines and the geo-thermal development are only as a result of Lake county's violent past. Those who live in Lake county, live in a volcanic cauldron known as the Clear Lake Volcanic Field that last erupted some 11,000 years ago.

Obsidian and Lake county diamonds are also a result of our violent past.

INTRODUCTION

THE WHITE CAPS:

Three miles south of Middletown, Lake county, California, in the year 1890, three people died as the result of a raid on a local saloon that was mostly patronized by miners from the nearby cinnabar mines.

The locals, although shocked and horrified by the murders, were more stunned by the circumstances involved with the incident, as well as, outraged at the overall outcome, regarding the charges levied, subsequent trials, verdicts, sentences and commuting there-of.

A book written about the incident: "The California White Cap Murders - An Episode In Vigilantism", was written by Helen Rocca Goss and published in 1969. The title says to me; the episode, (the raid) depicted within, was perpetrated by a bunch of vigilantes and when the raiders were titled the 'White Caps', they became a vigilante group.

The author of this book, Mrs. Rocca Goss was the youngest daughter of Andrew and Mary Rocca of Middletown. Mr. Rocca was well known and respected around the state and was the superintendent of the Great Western Mine at the time of this

incident. Mr. Rocca was very much involved in the solving of this crime and its final outcome and Mrs. Goss used information from court testimony, newspaper reports, archive searches, her mother's diary, interviews with citizens and other family members and her personal memories in the writing of the book.

However, being a story teller myself, this will be my version of this particular event, however, I must say, Mrs. Goss's book is a wealth of information.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary says: *Vigilante entered English in the 19th century, borrowed from the Spanish word of the same spelling which meant "watchman, guard" in that language. The Spanish word can be traced back to the Latin vigilare, meaning "to keep awake." The earliest use of the word in English was to refer to a member of a vigilance committee, a committee organized to suppress and punish crime summarily, as when the processes of law appear inadequate. The word may often be found in an attributive role, as in the phrases "vigilante justice," or "vigilante group." In this slightly broadened sense it carries the suggestion of the enforcement of laws without regard to due process or the general rule of law.*

We must then conclude, by using Merriam-Webster's definition of the word vigilante, Mrs. Goss, in her title, is saying this vigilante group was: *"a committee organized to suppress and punish crime summarily, as when the processes of law appear inadequate."* Therefore, she is saying the White Caps were in the act of pursuing justice, regarding a crime that had not been, in their collective minds, adequately addressed by legal law enforcement, when the murders were committed.

But why the main part of the title, California White Cap Murders?

White cap groups were notorious in the mid-west and southern United States after the Civil War but they were far from being , *"a committee organized to suppress and punish crime summarily, as when the processes of law appear inadequate."*

The movement started when white males began forming secret societies in order to attempt to deliver what they considered justice on the frontier independent from the state. These groups became known as the "White Caps". The first White Cap operations were generally aimed at those who went against a community's values. Men who neglected or abused their family, people who showed excessive laziness, and women who had children out of wedlock, all were likely targets.

Generally, the members of this society were disguised and always attacked at night. Physical attacks could include such things as whipping, drowning, firing shots into houses, arson and other brutalities, with whipping and threats constituting the majority of the tactics used against victims. The White Caps also used non-violent means of intimidation to force certain residents from their homes. These included posting signs on doors of homes, as well as cornering a target and verbally threatening them. If a resident or witness to a crime did not abandon their home after being terrorized, White Caps sometimes murdered them.

These White cappers were a violent, lawless movement that occurred specifically in the United States. Eventually its legal definition became more general than the specific movement itself: "White capping is the crime of threatening a person with violence. Ordinarily, members of the minority groups are the victims of white capping."

White capping led to such insurgent groups as The Night Riders, Bald Knobbers and the Ku Klux Klan.

The activities of all the White Cap groups were widely reported throughout the nation in the newspapers, including small town local papers, so when the 1890 murderers in Middletown were identified as White cappers the event and subsequent trials drew national attention. Newspapers around the nation were picking up the story and several reporters covered the trials being held in Lakeport of the accused White cappers.

After studying this episode that happened in Middletown, these perpetrators had rightfully earned the title of 'White cappers', but, since the Riches and Bennett were not guilty of any crime, I cannot abide by the act being labeled an episode in vigilantism. To me, it was more an act of retribution with an underlying motive to run Bennett out of Lake county.

CINNABAR:

Cinnabar is a bright scarlet to brick-red form of mercury sulfide (HgS) that is the most common source of ore for refining mercury, and is the historic source for the brilliant red or scarlet pigment termed vermilion.

Mercury is commonly known as quicksilver and was formerly named hydrargyrum. The Romans used mercury for a variety of purposes and they gave it the Latin name hydrargyrum, meaning liquid silver, from which the chemical symbol for mercury, Hg, is derived.

Mercury readily joins with other metals to form alloys, and this makes it useful in processing gold and silver. Much of the drive to develop mercury ore deposits in the United States came after the discovery of gold and silver in California and other western states in the 1800s.

Cinnabar generally occurs as a vein-filling mineral associated with recent volcanic activity and alkaline hot springs high-up in the Earth's crust.

The largest most successful mercury mine in this area, Lake county, California, was the Sulphur Bank Mine near Clear Lake and Borax Lake where Sulphur and borax were also mined.

The majority of the local mercury mines were located in the Clear Lake Volcanic Field, which last erupted some 11,000 years ago.

Supposedly the first cinnabar was locally discovered in a road cut while building the Berryessa to Lower Lake road in 1860, which we now call Morgan Valley Road. This site later became the Knoxville mining district about 12 miles south-east of the Sulphur Bank mine.

It was around 1872 when the price paid for mercury, as well as, the smelting process, both improved, this in-turn spurred on the development of more mines in south Lake county. By 1873 the Great Western mine was operating in the Mayacamas district.

The process for extracting mercury from its ores has not changed much in the last 2,300 years. Cinnabar ore is crushed and heated to release the mercury as a vapor. The mercury vapor is then cooled, condensed, and collected. Almost 95% of the mercury content of cinnabar ore can be recovered using this process.

However, mercury is highly toxic to humans. Mercury exposure may come from inhalation, ingestion, or absorption through the skin. Of the three, inhalation of mercury vapor is the most dangerous. Short-term exposure to mercury vapor can produce weakness, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and other symptoms within

a few hours. The chronic form is marked by stomatitis, metallic taste in the mouth, a blue line along the border of the gum, sore hypertrophied gums that bleed easily, loosening of the teeth, excessive salivation, tremors and incoordination, and psychiatric symptoms including abnormal excitability, anxiety, and social withdrawal.

In other words, the miners who worked near the retort, where the mercury was vaporized, ran the risk of inhaling those mercury vapors and suffering mental issues, such as not thinking cognitively and anger issues and possibly thinking it was rational to tar and feather someone you disliked and running them out of the county with a cat of nine tails.

The Bradford mine was just one of several mines in this part of Lake county that mined cinnabar.

THE BRADFORD:

Edward Winslow Bradford was born March 1, 1824 in Kingston, Plymouth, Massachusetts and made his way to California as a young man.

In 1870 the Ed W. Bradford family was living in Lower Lake, Lake county. Ed was 46 years old and was now married to Isabella Taylor who he married in San Francisco December 7, 1850. Isabella was born in Scotland and was about 10 years Ed's junior. They had a sizable family they were raising in Lower Lake. Their first born, a son they named Charles Pelham Bradford, was 18 years old. Charles had 6 brothers and 2 sisters; Edward James, Leonia, George Fredrick, Margaret I., Waldo, Frank, Herbert and Arthur.

On November first 1873 Ed filed for a land patent for 160 acres in township 10 north, section 7 west near the base of Mount Saint Helena but still in Lake county with the intent of farming and building a hotel.

A year later on November 5, 1874 it was reported in the Russian River Flag: *"There were filed last Saturday articles of incorporation of the Bradford Consolidated Quicksilver Mining Company; to operate in Lake county. Capital, of 10,000, in shares of \$100 each. Directors E. W. Bradford, J. R. Deardorff, G.*

P. McCrea, Frank Saxe and C. E. Wilson. The principal place of business will be in San Francisco.”

Seven months later June 24, 1875 Russian River Flag reported the following: *“The Mammoth Consolidated Quicksilver Company has commenced an action in the Fifteenth District Court against The Bradford Consolidated Quicksilver Company. The plaintiff alleges that both corporations carry on operations in Lake county and that the defendant is wrongfully in possession of 27,000 feet in length of its property by 1.000 feet in width, “heretofore known as the Mammoth location or claims.”*

The Mammoth Consolidated Quicksilver Company is obviously the owner of the Bullion Mine claim and the disagreement over boundaries began.

By 1877 the Bradford Summer Resort is being advertised and is entertaining many guests offering hunting, trout fishing, saddle horses, a fine house with well-furnished large airy rooms, excellent fare and good treatment only 12 miles from Calistoga on their newly acquired property south of Middletown.

On June 6, 1878 Edward W. Bradford died Leaving Isabella to maintain the Resort, pursue the mine and raise the family. Charles P. was 26 years old, Edward J. was 24 and George F. was 16, plenty old enough to help their mother, Isabella, run the businesses.

The 1880 Census listed as living in Middletown: Isabella Bradford, 46; Chas. Pelham Bradford, 28; Edward James Bradford, 26; Leonia Bradford, 22; Geo. Calley Bradford, 18; Margaret I. Bradford, 16; Waldo Emerson Bradford, 14; Frank Bradford, 12; Herbert S. Bradford, 8 and Arthur Bradford, 6.

On March 30, 1881 the Calistogian, a Calistoga newspaper, reported that the Bradford property had been bonded and the prospects were very favorable for a cinnabar mine.

On November 5, 1887 the Daily Alta, a San Francisco newspaper, reported:

“Quicksilver Specimens.

Specimens of quicksilver ore from the new mine in Napa county, known as the Bradford mine, were received at the State Mining Bureau yesterday. There were taken from the mine last month 300 flasks of quicksilver. The shaft is down 100 feet.”

Then on April 25, 1888 the same paper reported:

“New Quicksilver Company.

The Bradford Quicksilver Mining Company incorporated yesterday to work the Bradford lode in Lake county.- Directors - C. P. Bradford, Edward Bradford, of Lake county, and G. Frederick Bradford, John Treadwell and James Treadwell, of San Francisco. Capital stock. \$80,000; divided into sixteen shares.”

What happened to the earlier corporation, I don't know but obviously the Bradford boys were off and running, however, the law suit and those involved with the Bullion Mine were still an obstacle.

According to testimony from the White Cap trials it was during this time that the men of the Bradford Mine formed their secret society, the Hyjergurums.

HYDRARGYRUM:

(hî`drär`jî`rŭm)

At the Bradford mine there was built a school house to accommodate and teach the children of the employees of the Bradford Mine and the surrounding area. In the evening, once a week, a group of men regularly met at this same school house

These particular men belonged to a secret society of 26 men who had formed about the same time the new Bradford company formed and they called themselves the “order of the Hyjergurums”.

Those unfamiliar with the Latin name for ‘mercury’, speculated years later, while going over the details of the White Cap raid, that the secret society’s name was derived from two cats, one named Hygie and the other named Rugie who were the mascots of the order.

However, one can easily believe the order’s name is not just a coincidence, named after two cats, once one deduces that; the name of a secret society, made up of miners who mined cinnabar ore to produce mercury, or ‘hydrargyrum’, could have meant hydrargyrum but could have easily mis-spelled or mis-pronounced it as Hyjergurums. But this also implies to me that the person who promoted this name for this secret society was an educated man and knowledgeable regarding the mining of the Earth’s elements, their symbols and names, particularly mercury .

This society met every Tuesday evening at the school house and several times the topic of discussion was mining activity, the Bullion mine and Fred Bennett and it was also stated by a couple raiders that Frank Bradford attended some meetings.

There was never, and has never been, any information brought forward to imply any other group of miners from other mines had formed a similar secret order of men, so what was the reason for forming the Hyjergurums and only at the Bradford? Who had instigated this move to form a secret society and for what purpose? The answer was not reported, if it had ever been divulged at all, so we can only speculate.

After gathering for nearly four years their focus seemed to center on Fred Bennett, miner, bouncer and part owner of the Bullion Mine.

So who was this man, Fred Bennett, that seemed to deserve the wrath of the Hyjergurums, other than a bruiser who worked for the Riches to maintain order in their establishment?

He was born about 1860 in New York and in 1888 he was registered to vote in Lake county and was employed as a general laborer. He was registered to vote at the Great Western mine.

We also know he was still in Lake county in October of 1890, as that was the year of the raid and he testified at the trials in 1891.

He owned a quarter interest in the Bullion mine and defended his claim. When the Bradfords charged him with “claim jumping” and sent some men over to make their point clear to Bennett, he knocked their engineer, their leader, down an embankment for his trouble. That engineer was C. E. Blackburn.

Blackburn would not forget, in fact he was one of the instigators and an associate leader of the raiding party.

I. THE RAID

THE DASTARDLY DEED:

It was after dark, the month of All Hallow's Eve, Friday, October 10th, the 283rd day of 1890 and Middletown was alive with political festivities as this was the evening of the Candidate's Ball.

Attending these lively festivities were; Lake County Sheriff, Gawn Moore; under Sheriff, A. H. Spurr; Lake County District Attorney, M. S. Sayre; Constable, J. W. Ransdell and Justice of the Peace, J. L. Read. Also enjoying the festivities were the local doctor, Roland E. Hartley, M. D., the candidates vying for the seats up for election and most of the local citizens of the area.

But just 3 miles south of Middletown, in a saloon sitting just back from the road which led to the Bradford Mine and then on to Calistoga, it was a different story.

The saloon was very quiet inside as it seemed everyone was attending the festivities taking place in nearby Middletown and those souls who were inside had no sense that havoc would soon rain down on them, so to pass the time, Mrs. Riche and Bennett played cards as Mr. Riche observed.

This particular saloon was called the Camper's Retreat and it was the intended destination of the hooded marauders as Fred Bennett was their intended target.

Their faces and hands blackened with a mixture of grease, burnt cork and oil lamp soot, their heads covered with hoods made from old pillow cases and flour sacks with eye holes cut into them, their bodies and legs wrapped in burlap and with mufflers on their feet, eleven men descended on the saloon, with vengeance on their mind. They carried with them an old lard bucket now filled with tar, a sack full of chicken feathers, a whip known as a 'cat-of-nine-tails' and an assortment of different firearms that included pistols, rifles and shotguns. These eleven men had met several times and planned on how they were going to take retribution against Fred Bennett, the bartender-bouncer of this saloon, to satisfy their grievances.

Although Halloween costumed evil was afoot, this was all happening on a most wonderful Indian Summer evening under a moonless, star-lite sky with a crispness in the air. It was around 9pm when the eleven hooded men struck, bursting into the saloon brandishing firearms and demanding Bennett, startling the occupants inside.

Was this a robbery? Was it an early Halloween prank Riche wondered?

Mrs. Riche jumped up and jerked the hood off of the head of one of the invaders and was startled to recognize him as a local miner and customer of the saloon. A shot was fired.

Bennett soon figured out, as a bullet whizzed by him, they wanted him, they meant business and this was no prank. He ran for the Riche's bedroom.

Mr. Riche tried to stop what happened next but without success; Mrs. Riche was struggling with one of the invaders but she was thrown to the floor, held down and a volley of gun-shots rang out.

Helen Matilda Riche was shot at least four times and Steve Riche once.

Bennett was nowhere to be seen.

In the melee that followed, Mrs. Riche, severely wounded and bleeding, was hanging onto William McGuire, a raider, as he was trying to leave. Mr. Riche pulled her off of him and pushed McGuire out the door closing and locking it as he did and as he was doing that, a shot from outside rang out, McGuire was dead, but Riche did not know that fact.

When the shooting stopped, Bennett, who had bailed out of the window in the Riche's bedroom, returned and entered the saloon through the same window and blocked the bedroom door until Riche identified himself and told Bennett he needed help. Bennett helped Riche put his wounded wife in their bed and then Riche told him to go for help.

Bennett first stopped at the neighbor's house, the home of Thomas and Annie Habishaw and told them what had happened. Bennett then asked Mrs. Habishaw to please go to the aid of Mrs. Riche.

The first on scene, of course, were the neighbors who lived about a half mile away, the Habishaws. Thomas found McGuire on the porch and hailed Riche, who then let him in and Thomas told Steve that McGuire was dead on the porch and inquired as to whether shots had been fired from within the house. Surprised to hear that McGuire was dead, Steve said there were no shots fired from within the house by himself, Helen or Bennett.

Bennett was on horseback and was soon able to raise the alarm in Middletown that had plenty of law officers available due to the existing Candidates Ball. Dr. Hartley grabbed his bag and immediately headed for the saloon as well.

Upon arrival they found one dead raider on the front porch of the saloon who was immediately identified as McGuire. They found a blood trail, the bucket of tar, the feathers and the cat of nine-tails and parts of disguises.

Inside the saloon everything was in disarray. There was blood, overturned furniture, bullet holes and bloody weapons about.

Under inquiry by law enforcement, Bennett identified the miner, who Mrs. Riche had exposed, as Henry Arkarro. Now two raiders identity was known.

Dr. Hartley found Mrs. Riche in her bed, gravely wounded, having been shot at least four times in the chest. He knew her wounds would bring her demise and she seemed very depressed, struggling to breath.

HIDING IN PLAIN-SIGHT:

Helen Matilda Riche was not her real name.

She was born Helen Matilda Sherington in Surry, England, September of 1852, the daughter of Charles and Mary Sherington. She was one of 5 children. One older brother, William Charles; two older sisters Mary Jane and Anne Maria and a younger brother Charles. Her family fondly called her 'Nellie'.

J. W. Riche's real name was Stephen Thompson who was also born in England. He and 'Nellie' were married June 4, 1878, so, 'Helen Matilda Thompson' was her real name.

Helen and Stephen had got themselves into a financial pickle in England and had fled to America without even telling their families they were leaving. This is probably the reason for the name change; a fresh start. Helen's younger brother, Charles, traveled to America with them and he was busy trying to find his way in this new exciting adventure.

The trio arrived in the U.S.A. in March of 1883 and Helen corresponded with her sister Annie (Anne) from the mid-west in November of that same year. In February of the following year, 1884, Helen wrote Annie again from Kansas City, Missouri.

Helen had a chronic health condition and the cold weather in middle America took it's toll on her. So looking toward a new and prosperous future in a climate more suited to Helen's needs, Steve and Helen headed for California. Young Charles decided to remain in the mid-west.

By 1887 Steve and 'Nellie' were living in Lake county, California running the Camper's Retreat south of Middletown and a short time later Nellie's older brother, William Charles Sherington, showed up in Lake county and hired on as a miner.

THE DASHING OF HOPE:

Unfortunately, Nellie's lungs had been ruined by the gunshots to her chest and she struggled for four days before suffocating to death from her wounds. It was 8pm Tuesday, October 14, 1890. Steve tried to carry-on, but losing Nellie to this violence, just seven years after arriving in this new land, had an irreversible impact on Steve. Steve died December 29, 1890 of apoplexy, surely brought on by the recent events in his life making him a victim of the crime as well.

Now there were three deaths resulting from the raid on the Camper's Retreat.

The newspapers reported that Nellie's funeral was the largest ever in Middletown and everybody joined in the procession to the Middletown cemetery.

For reasons only known by those involved, Stephen Thompson's death was recorded as Stephen M. Riche and he was buried on Cobb Mountain in the private cemetery known as the McIntire Ranch Cemetery. Besides Steve there are 3 children of James P. Stephens and an unidentified male Indian memorialized there. The three children as well as their father all died of smallpox in the 1860s.

As an additional twist, in the probate records settling the estate of James P. Stephens in 1867, fourteen hundred dollars was left to F. ? Bennett. That probably would not be Fred Bennett the bouncer but maybe a relative of his? Since Bennett

not only worked for the Riches, but he also lived with them, he may have made Steve's final arrangements.

However, in a letter written by Nellie's brother, Wm. Sherington to Wm. Pretty, his brother-in-law, he took credit for burying Steve and stated: "next to Nell".

ANOTHER CASUALTY:

William Charles Sherington knew the men who worked at the Bradford and was friends with several of them. Because of this he was aware of the attention that was being focused on Bennett. He may have even been a member of the secret organization, the 'order of the Hyjergurums'.

William had warned his sister and brother-in-law, on more than one occasion, that they should get rid of Bennett, that he was no-good and a trouble maker. But Steve was not a man to be pushed around and unfortunately for him and Nellie, he didn't take William's advice.

After Steve died, William found warning letters in Steve's personal affects from anonymous sources telling them to get rid of Bennett.

In a letter William wrote and sent to his brother-in-law, William Pretty in England, January 31, 1891 he spoke of Steve and Nellie and commented; "*they sought gold and got lead.*"

What a tragic end for a young couple seeking a new life.

The fact that William knew about the impending raid on his sister's establishment came out during the trials. It was earlier in the evening of that fateful 10th of October, a man named Adolphus Liefeld had gone to W. R. McGuire's house to consult with him about some tools. He testified in court that when he arrived at McGuire's home, B. F. Staley, John Archer and William Sherington were there. McGuire, Staley and Archer were all part of the raiding party and Sherington was there as they prepared.

Sick with guilt about his sister's murder and his life, 54 year old William Charles Sherington died a broke and broken man. William was a father and had been

married but he was a drinker and an abuser and during a period when divorce was rare in England, his wife successfully received a divorce from him.

He could not have been very proud of his legacy.

San Francisco Chronicle
Friday, March 19, 1897

He Died Suddenly at the Jefferson Hotel - William Sherrington who died suddenly of angina pectoris at the Jefferson Hotel on Wednesday was the son of a Methodist minister in London. He had been a journalist and shorthand reporter in England. He was a brother of Mrs. J. W. Rich who with her husband was murdered by so-called whitecaps in Lake County October 10 1890 The whitecaps were looking for a man named Bennett who stopped at the Rich place Bennett escaped and Rich and his wife were killed Three men Blackburn, Staley and Charles Osgood are serving long terms In prison for the murder.

II. THE RAIDERS

THE ELEVEN:

Actually, up to the day of the raid, there were twelve men. John Francis, a teamster at the Bradford was included also, however, the day of the raid his wife convinced Francis to not participate. Because he was involved in all the planning, his knowledge of the plan was very informative for the court.

Once the group decided to raid the Camper's Retreat and punish Bennett they met to finalize their plans. The first meeting regarding final preparations happened the evening of the 8th of October at A. E. Richards house. Those in attendance were; W. R. McGuire, C. W. Evans, C. W. Osgood, C. E. Blackburn, T. B. Martin and J. Archer.

The next evening they met again at the same place and all twelve men were present.

Those entering the saloon would be McGuire, Bichard, Evans, Osgood, Cradwick and Archer. Archer was supposed to hold and gag Mrs. Riche while the others

detained Mr. Riche and grabbed Bennett. Bichard, who was a stranger to most, was to give the verbal commands.

McGuire led the way into the saloon followed by Bichard and then the others which included Arkarro.

Before trial, Frank Bradford's name appeared on the list of those involved but was later removed saying "it was a mistake". However, during testimony it was stated that Frank Bradford was in attendance at the second meeting at Bichard's house. It was also testified to that Frank was to sneak on the saloon, peer in the windows and see the placement of all those inside just prior to the raid.

These eleven men were generally familiar with Bennett and the proprietors of the Camper's retreat, Steve and Helen Riche, as they all worked at the Bradford Mine, which was just a mile south of the saloon and most all had visited the establishment many times, consumed some grog, played cards and several of them, at one time or another, had been unceremoniously removed from the saloon by Bennett with bruises to prove it. They all had reasons for not liking Bennett and some even disliked the Riches.

The eleven men who attacked the Camper's Retreat, some rather reluctantly, were just laborers for the Bradfords. Oh, some were more exuberant about getting back at Bennett than others but most, it seems, were just a victim of circumstances.

The one who wanted to be the leader of the raiding party was William Riley McGuire, a forty year old Texas carpenter who was a husband and a father and who did not like the Riches. He was shot and killed the night of the raid by an unknown member of the raiding party.

That left law enforcement with the task of arresting the one raider who had been identified, Arkarro and getting him to give-up the names of all the others involved

Arkarro was soon arrested and gave up the names of the others involved.

Besides Bichard, Blackburn, Osgood, Martin, Evans, Cradwick and Archer there were August Lund and B. F. Staley

SOME GO TO TRIAL

Those men who were arrested, spent time in jail, but were not punished by prison time, were; Henry Arkarro, Italian, the raider who Mrs. Riche ripped the hood off of; A.E. Bichard, it was reported that he was the merriest man in the group, that he had a fat, good-humored French face that always wrinkled to laugh. That these two, Arkarro and Bichard were close friends and that while they were in jail Bichard tried to improve Arkarro's English. Also, there was Charles William Evans; born in California about 1870, he was the youngest of the bunch. He was about 6 feet tall with a slender build and his trade was carpenter. He was described as having a "touch-of-down" on his upper lip. And finally John Archer who was described as a big, strong, fine-looking Scotsman who was less than thirty years old and that whenever he spoke he always had a pleasant smile. Archer had a wife and two children waiting for him in Scotland.

These four men; Arkarro, Bichard, Evans and Archer had all charges dismissed for turning states evidence.

John Archer's confession was printed in the San Francisco Examiner, early 1891. He was the first to confess followed by Henry Arkarro and C. W. Evans then by A. E. Bichard.

Archer said he came from Scotland in July, 1888, and had a wife and two children there.

"After that," said the witness, "I went to live in the Bullion mine cabin, on the Bullion mining claim, last October, with Staley. I knew William R. McGuire, C. E. Blackburn, Osgood, Lund, Arkarro, Bichard, Martin and Cradwick."

"After getting on the porch the whistle was blown and we entered the house one after another. I immediately tried to find Mrs. Riche, but did not see her in the front room. Then I went to the kitchen. Not finding her there I went into the bedroom. Just as I was going into this room I was struck on the leg by a spent ball, and at the same time Bennett ran against me, nearly knocking me down. About this time the shooting in the main room stopped. Six or seven shots were fired. I then thought as I had no weapon to defend myself with I had better get away from there. I went back to the front door of the saloon as quickly as possible and saw someone lying on the porch. I went down the road and told the hoys there was some one shot. They said no, but I insisted that there was and thought it was Staley. We

returned to the Bichard house and removed the masks, which were to be burned at the firebox at the mine. I took my rifle and went back to the Staley cabin, sat down and was very uneasy. In a few minutes I heard someone whistle. I went out and answered by whistling. Whoever it was did not hear me. The party came back in a few minutes and whistled again, when I answered by shouting. He came up to the cabin and proved to be Staley. He told me he thought it was McGuire who was killed, as he saw two men whom he presumed were John Ransdal and Deputy Sheriff A. H. Spurr watching McGuire's cabin. When coming together in the road after the tragedy we repeated the oath and agreed that we would never give away or divulge any of the events of that night. I took my gun to the Birchard house on the night of the tragedy, but did not take it with me to the Riche house."

Sonoma Democrat, 7 March 1891

A reporter Interviewed Bichard About Archer's Confession.

"What do you think was the real object of the white caps' attack on Bennett?" the reporter ask.

Bichard responded: *"I understand that he had been making threats against some of the men in the mines. He owned a fourth interest in the new Bullion mine, you know. Some entertain the belief that the white caps were organized at the instigation of the owners of the other mine, and that their real purpose was to drive all the Bullion men out of the country."*

Ukiah Daily Journal March 6, 1891

A Confession

In the report it is stated:

"Arkarro made a confession at the time of the coroner's inquest which he claims he was intimidated into retracting that implied there was another man involved in the affair."

SOME GO TO SAN QUENTIN:

The man found most responsible for the outcome of the raid was Cornelius Emmett Blackburn, engineer, forty-three, from Ohio whose wife and children had left him and moved to Arizona in 1878. The same Blackburn who confronted Bennett on behalf of the Bradfords in an earlier episode of threatening behavior. He was sentenced to twenty five years in San Quentin Prison

The first man tried for the murders was Benjamin F. Staley, a single, thirty six year old reluctant participant, from New York and who had an interest in the Bullion Mine along with Bennett. He was sentenced to twenty years in San Quentin Prison.

Next was a miner from Kentucky who was born in England, forty two year old Robert F. Cradwick, single. He withdrew his not-guilty plea and pled guilty. He also was sentenced to twenty years in San Quentin Prison.

The last man sentenced to San Quentin Prison was Charles Walter Osgood, a thirty year old young man from Massachusetts who had married a local Middletown girl and started a family. Her name was Annette M. Farmer. He also withdrew his not-guilty plea and pled guilty, he was sentenced to twelve years.

The last two members of the raiding party were August 'Gus' Lund and Thomas B. Martin who had all charges against them dropped for lack of evidence.

Lund was a stout, blonde headed, 27 year old Swede who was a blacksmith and had become a citizen in 1889. Martin, born in Canada but naturalized in 1871, was a redheaded 48 year old teamster with a large mustache.

There were different versions of what exactly happened inside the saloon for those few minutes during the raid. For instance, even though Mrs. Riche was the center of attention by ripping off Arkarro's mask and then being man-handled and shot, Archer said he couldn't find her anywhere in the saloon. Archer also claimed when he went out the front door someone was laying on the front porch but that conflicts with Mr. Riche's account who claimed he pulled Mrs. Riche from McGuire, pushed him out the door, locked it and then heard a shot.

However, the end was still the same. The eleven were exposed, McGuire was dead and Mrs. Riche was mortally wounded.

III. MIRABEL

BRADFORDS SELL

One year later.

San Francisco Call

Quicksilver Mine Sold.

Calistoga, Nov. 26, 1891 — *“The Bradford quicksilver mine, together with the lands surrounding, has been sold by the Bradford family and associates in business to D. L. Mills of New York, J. B. Randol, Superintendent of the New Almaden quicksilver mine in Santa Clara County, and Thomas Bell, formerly interested in the New Idria quicksilver mine. The price paid has not been made public, but is presumed to be large.”*

At some point, the new owners, Mills, Randol and Bell, changed the name of the mine from the Bradford to the Mirabel. Local folklore is; they arrived at the new name by using Mi from Mills, ra from Randol and bel from Bell and named the mine the Mi-ra-bel. However, Mirabel is too a female name stemming from the Latin word mirabilis, meaning "wondrous" or "of wondrous beauty". So you have to decide.

12/26/1891 Sonoma Democrat

The Bradford Mine.

“Extensive improvements on the Bradford mining property are contemplated, but they are not to be rushed in a manner to cause unnecessary cost and waste. The old furnaces are not to be abandoned, but will be repaired and somewhat changed, and be used as long as they do fairly good work. During the meantime new furnaces will be constructed, and the output of the mine greatly increased. Underground work is all to be done by Cornish men. Outside of the principals in the transaction no one knows the exact amount paid for the property hut it was between \$600,000 and \$800,000, fully three times the amount asked for the property when it was offered in London this time last year. The increased output of the Bradford mine will help to keep up the quicksilver product of California, which has not been falling off as generally supposed. While some of the mines show a decrease in production others are steadily increasing, and thereby keeping up the average. The receipts of quicksilver in San Francisco to date are 1,000 flasks more than they were this time last year.”

THE CONTEST CONTINUES:

Morning Union 14 Jan 1897

Interesting Contest Over the Mirabel Quicksilver Mine in Lake County.

“Members of the bar are interested in a contest just begun for the ownership of the Mirabel quicksilver mine in Lake county, which was recently sold for \$1,000,000, says the Examiner. It is owned by the Standard Quicksilver Company, which purchased it from E. J. Bradford. The property was originally obtained from the United States government by Mr. Bradford under an agricultural patent. He started to convert it into a summer resort by erecting a big hotel. In digging a well to procure a supply of water he struck a rich vein of cinnabar. This was six years after he had obtained a patent for the land as agricultural. The cinnabar vein proved to be very rich, and Mr. Bradford abandoned his hotel scheme and began to develop the mine. He was very successful, but the tempting offer of the Standard Quicksilver Company induced him to sell it. The latter then arranged to work it on a large scale, but in doing so was opposed by a number of Lake county people, who asserted a right to mine on the property, claiming that as it was mineral in character the agricultural patent of Bradford was void. They included Ann Habishaw, B. F. Staley, R. J. Hudson, G. W. Davis, Grant Read, John R. Dewar and W. H. Parsons. A. H. Ricketts, on behalf of the Standard Quicksilver Company, has sued these people in both the Federal and State courts. They' have sunk a winze into the Standard Company's mine, and the latter company has obtained from Superior Judge R. W. Crump of Lake county an injunction restraining them from carrying on additional work until the title to the property can be heard and decided. Judge Crump required the company' to put up a bond of \$40,000 to protect the interests of the Lake county citizens in case they finally - won the contest on its merits. The Standard Company in another suit has prayed United States Circuit Judge McKenna to uphold its title and eject the Lake county people from the property on the ground that the patent of Bradford was legal because the land at the time it was patented was not known to be mineral. Attorneys look upon the suit, aside from the valuable mine involved, as presenting the interesting question of the validity of a United States agricultural patent to land that subsequently shows valuable minerals.”

Mrs. Goss wrote in her book that the “controversy over the boundaries between the Bradford (Mirabel) and the Bullion Mines apparently dragged on for years”. She wrote of her father, Andrew Rocca, going to court in July of 1897 as a witness in the case and that when the case was finally settled she quoted the Calistogian of

October 22, 1897 which commented: *"The decision was in favor of the defendants and was a most righteous one."* And she again quoted the Calistogian of January 28, 1898 reporting: *"The Habishaws and their associates then sued the Standard Quicksilver Mining Company [Mirabel] and were awarded damages amounting to \$7,000."*

THE BULLION WINS:

The Middletown Independent reported:

"Friday of last week, Judge Crump handed down his decision in the case of the Standard Quicksilver company vs. Mrs. Annie Habishaw, G. W. Davis, R. J. Hudson, W. H. Parson. The decision was in favor of the defendants and was a most righteous one. On Monday the representative of the Bullion company took possession of the property at issue."

About the same time, Charles Osgood, the second of the Lake county whitecaps to be released from prison, walked out of prison having served the sentence imposed by the court.

It was noted; *"like all the other whitecaps, Osgood has been an exemplary prisoner."* He maintained that *"he is innocent and that the true perpetrator of the deed has never been punished."*

IV. EPILOGUE

EQUAL JUSTICE?

Twelve men were invited but only eleven men were identified as having participated in the plot to punish Bennett and then too, to have actually taken part in the raid on the Camper's Retreat.

One raider was killed during the raid so that left ten men, who were identified as being involved in the conspiracy and subsequent murder, who could be charged with the crime.

Several were offered a front seat in the get-out-of-jail-free wagon if they turned state's evidence but most refused and honored the oath they all took to not inform on another. Those who were willing to testify to help convict their fellow marauders walked free.

What about the Bradfords? More than one of those involved mentioned Frank Bradford's name. And then there was the dispute over the Bullion mine claim and the fact that the Bradfords had gone after Bennett before over that very claim? Were they culpable? Were they the real instigators? Who named the "secret order of the Hyjergurums"?

There was no evidence B. F. Staley was in the saloon yet he was the first tried and found guilty and sentenced to 20 years for the murder. He also owned an interest in the Bullion mine claim; did that play a part?.

Then there is the opposite of Staley, Bichard, who was second in the saloon behind McGuire and when McGuire threw Mrs. Riche to the floor and held her down, someone shot her. Bichard was set free.

In a letter to the Habishaws penned before he went to prison, Staley laid the blame squarely on Bichard. Plus there is the statement from Osgood when he was released from prison stating that: *"he is innocent and that the true perpetrator of the deed has never been punished."*

Since the law and the court felt Blackburn the most culpable why wasn't he tried first?

There were lots of feelings running wild locally, regarding who was guilty and who was not or who was the most guilty and who was the least. Folks were signing petitions requesting to have some of the men pardoned. Some voiced their anger about citizens going to prison and foreigners going free and underlying it all were Civil War loyalties. And the rich and powerful were throwing around their influence as well. (Seems nothing has changed.)

ANDREW ROCCA:

As noted, Andrew Rocca was Mrs. Goss's father, the superintendent of the Great Western mine, he was a highly respected member of the community and was very much involved with the whole White Cap episode. But once those responsible for the raid were identified and had had their futures determined, Mr. Rocca was also appointed to settle the estate of the Thompsons, aka, the Riches.

On August 10th, 1891 Mr. Rocca wrote and sent a letter to Helen Thompson's mother, Mary Sherington in England, informing her that he was settling the Thompson's estate. He also mentions in the letter that he had too informed C. Sherington of Chicago of his responsibilities. So in 1891, we can still assume, young Charles was still in Chicago.

However, Mrs. Sherington never saw Mr. Rocca's letter as the shock of 'Nellie's' murder was too great for her and she passed August 6th, 1891. Mr. Rocca's letter was penned just four days later, August 10th.

There was little, if any, of an estate to settle once creditors were paid. The indebtedness of \$1050.00 was paid. The assets listed were the place, a piano, some old coins and Nellie's jewelry.

HABISHAW:

As before told, Tom and Annie Habishaw were the Riche's neighbors and the first on scene the night of the raid. They were also friends of B. F. Staley.

Thomas H. Habishaw was born March 10, 1846 in Canada his wife Annie was born in Ontario in 1852, they were living in Middletown at the time of the 1880 Census and at that time they had five children; Mary J., 7; William H., 6; Edward G., 5; Jessie M., 3 and Bertrand J., 1.

They went on to enlarge their family having six more children. Archie born 1884; Charles born 1885; Walter Scott born 1888; Charlotte Grace born 1890; Alma Ruth born 1892 and Isabel Kathryn born 1894.

However tragedy struck in the summer of 1883. Several people contracted diphtheria in the Middletown area.

Diphtheria, a serious bacterial infection, affects the mucous membranes of the throat and nose. Once infected, the bacteria release dangerous substances called toxins. The toxins spread through the bloodstream and often cause a thick, gray coating to form in your nose, throat, air-way and on your tongue.

It was so devastating it made the newspapers.

Sonoma Democrat, 4 August 1883

Cases of Diphtheria. [Calistogian.]

“Several days ago, Mrs. Habishaw and child, living near the Gt. Western Gate, in Lake county, were taken sick, and Mrs. Mary Vivian, of Middletown, came down to take care of them bringing her seven children with her. There were also six children at the Habishaw house. Before Mrs. Habishaw and child fully recovered diphtheria broke out among the children, and one of Mrs. Vivian’s children died a week ago last Friday. The next case was one of Habishaw’s girls, (Jessie M) aged six years, who died last week on Tuesday. Then followed the death of two more of her children Saturday and Sunday last, at which time another member of Mrs. Vivian’s family, a boy thirteen year of age, was sick and probably died on Monday. On the day last mentioned four other children were sick, two of each family, and it is probable, judging from the other cases, that they are all dead by this time, or will soon die. We have obtained this information from a relative of the people above referred to, who visited the premises this week, but was not permitted to enter the house, though he conversed with persons there. He says that two of Lake county’s physicians had been in attendance, but could afford little or no relief, and that a doctor from San Francisco had also visited the house. He pronounced it malignant diphtheria. There is said to be a case at Bradford’s, near the Gt. Eastern mine. At Middletown there are several cases, and several deaths have occurred, including two children of Postmaster J. L. Read’s family.”

Untold in this newspaper article is the fact that Mary Vivian was the younger sister of Annie Habishaw and all the children were cousins. Mary Vivian was married to Henry D. Vivian who was registered to vote in Middletown in 1876 but in the 1880 census he is not listed and normally during this period in time Mary would have been referred to as Mrs. Henry Vivian if he were still living.

The four oldest Habishaw children; Mary, William, Edward and Jessie all perished as a result of the disease.

But tragedy had not run its course in the Habishaw family, Thomas was killed on July 3rd, 1895, in an accident at the Mirabel mine leaving Annie a widow with seven children, the oldest, Bertrand, would have been around sixteen.

Bertrand served in the military during WWI and died in France.

Thomas and Bertrand are both buried in the Middletown Cemetery. Thomas's plot is unknown, Bert is buried in the Magnolia Section 24 Plot #3.

Somehow Annie Habishaw acquired part interest in the Bullion mine as she is named as a principal in the legal settlement between the Bullion and the Mirabel in 1897.

The Habishaws were friends with their neighbor, Fred Bennett, who at one time owned one quarter interest in the Bullion and another friend of the Habishaws who owned an interest in the mine was B. F. Staley. Neither is listed as a principal in the legal settlement, possibly Annie may have acquired their interests.

Annie (nee Milne) Habishaw died in Alameda county, Ca. in 1947

THE BRADFORDS:

By 1900 the Bradfords had left Lake county and most were gathered under one roof at #8 Clifton St., Piedmont, Alameda county, California.

In the 1900 Census those listed at this address were Isabella Bradford, Chas P. Bradford, Geo C. Bradford, Margaret I. Bradford, Waldo E. Bradford, Frank Bradford, Minnie H. Bradford, Herbert S. Bradford, Arthur Bradford, Winslow Bradford, 6, Margaret Bradford, 2, Herbert H. Bradford, 7/12. Waldo was married to Minnie and Winslow, Margaret and Herbert were their children

Ten years later during the 1910 Census, Isabella Bradford's address was San Francisco Assembly District 39, 21st Ave, San Francisco, California. Isabella died that same year on July 28th.

Sometime after 1910 Charles P. Bradford, the oldest son, was married and in 1912/13 he had a son, Charles B. but by 1920 Charles P. was a widower. In the

1920 Census Charles P Bradford Age: 67 was living on a farm on Adams Street in Eden, Alameda, California his son was 17.

In 1893 Frank Bradford was married to Maud I Pettis, they had a daughter they named Dagmar. Frank died January 1st, 1940 in Santa Clara.

Edward Winslow Bradford, the father, is buried in the Middletown cemetery in the Magnolia Section.

J. L. READ

Farmer, Justice of the Peace, Postmaster and founder of the Middletown Independent.

Joseph Lilburn Read was born 29 July 1837 in Turkey Foot, Scott County, Kentucky. He was the son of Samuel Read and Elizabeth Cassandra Leach.

When his family came to California in the 1850s they settled in Eldorado county. His first visit to Lake county was in the fall of 1860 and he stayed the winter then returned to Eldorado county. He then returned to Lake county the summer of 1861 and married Margaret Davis, of Big Valley, near Kelseyville on 31 October that same year. They settled in Dixon, Solano County, where Mr. Read farmed until 1874 when he moved to Middletown.

He bought a ranch two miles northeast of town which he operated for four years. This would be now-a-days near the Bar X Ranch.

In 1877, he went in partners with John Good, Sr., and they engaged in hay baling and threshing of grain.

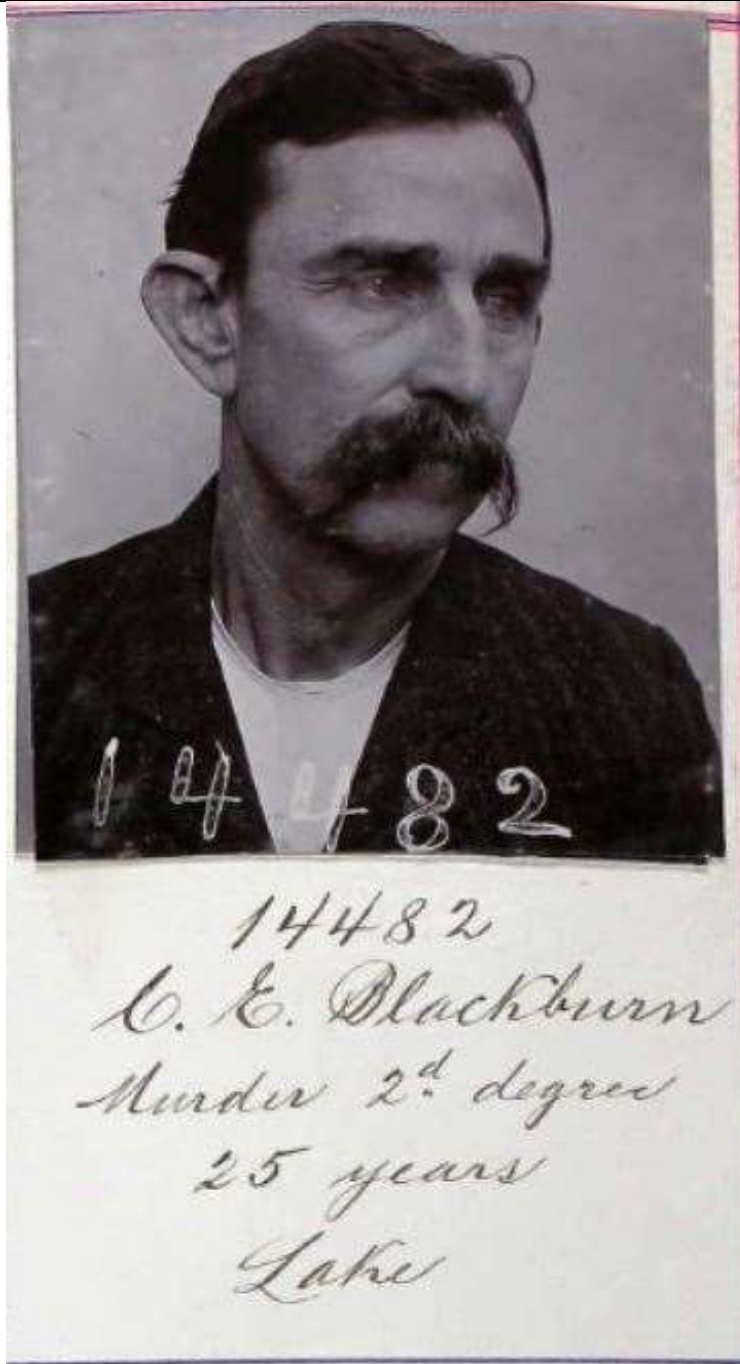
In 1883, as was mentioned previously, two of J. L. Read's children died of diphtheria. Those two children were Joseph Lee Read, age 4 years and Walter Howard Read, age 1 year. They both died July 20, 1883.

In 1886 the Middletown Independent was established by P. B. Graham and J. L. Read. Read bought Graham's interest in 1889 and later in the same year sold a half interest to W. C. Pentecost. In 1895 Read again acquired full control, placed T. A.

Read as editor until 1899, and then Warren E. Read until 1904, when the paper was sold to J. D. Kuykendall. The latter conducted it one year and sold it back to J. L. Read, Warren Read again becoming editor. On October 11, 1906, the paper passed to A. O. Stanley, who published it up to January 1, 1911, when he leased it to his son, "Mort" Stanley. The Independent was Republican in politics up to 1906, and independent after that.

J. L. Read died 23 July 1927 in Middletown, Lake county, California. He, his wife and some children are buried in the Middletown Cemetery.

MUG SHOTS



CORNELIUS EMMETT BLACKBURN:

The man considered to be most responsible for the raid on the Camper's Retreat, who shared equal billing with W. R. McGuire and was sentenced to spend 25 years in San Quentin, had local folks, including the Bradfords, trying to get him pardoned by Governor Markham who in February of 1892 was giving serious consideration to the issue. However, Blackburn's sentence was commuted to ten years instead.

C. E. Blackburn was a Civil War veteran who fought with the Union Army and he was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic or G.A.R. Civil War affiliations and loyalties were highly regarded during this time and this affiliation carried a lot of weight towards having his sentence commuted.

Cornelius Emmett Blackburn was born in Ohio in 1847. He married Josephine Stombs in Petaluma, California in 1867 who was born in Missouri on February 20, 1850. By 1870 they were living in Sacramento and had a baby girl, Amanda F (Minnie), born June 1869. Over the next 8 years they had 3 more children; Benjamin F., born in California 1873; Arthur E., born in California 1875 and Ida M., born in Arizona 1878. By 1880 Josephine and the children were living in Arizona and in the 1880 Census she list herself as divorced.

However, the San Francisco Call contradicted her claim and reported on September 23, 1897: "*Divorces were granted in the Superior Court yesterday as follows: Josephine Blackburn from Cornelius Blackburn, because he was convicted of a felony.*" This happened a full 17 years after she declared herself divorced and 17 years after she married another man, Alfred Shupp in Skull Valley, Arizona on September 27, 1880. Josephine may have felt a sense of urgency regarding her legal status with C. E. Blackburn as he was released the same month and year she got her divorce from him. Josephine and Alfred had a son, Chester Shupp in 1881. Alfred died in 1899.

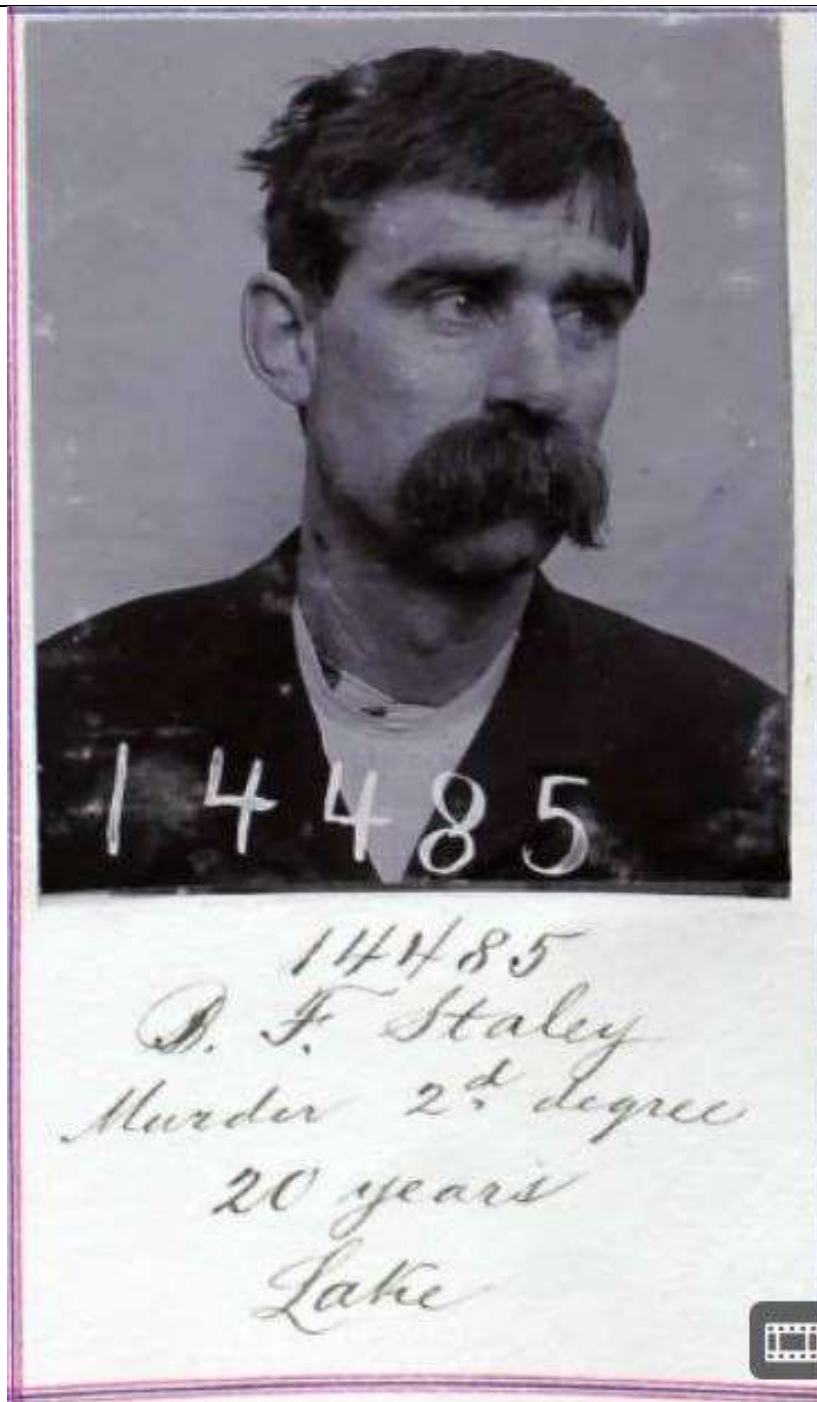
Blackburn was not worthy of the leniency he was shown as he continued a life of crime. "*Special Dispatch to The Call. SANTA CRUZ. April 17, 1890.— Cornelius E. Blackburn appeared before Judge L. F. Smith in the Superior Court this morning on the charge of grand larceny, and after pleading guilty he waived time and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment In Folsom. The charge against Blackburn was that of taking a horse and buggy from the stables of Hopkins & Ede in this city, which he did not return, but disposed of in his own interest. The act was committed in June of last year, and he was at large till captured by Sheriff Besse in Sacramento last month.*"

In the 1890 census C. E. Blackburn is listed as a resident of Folsom Prison



No. 4781 2t.
Name C. Blackburn.
County Santa Cruz
Crime Grand Larceny.
Term - 10 - years.
Received April 23, 1900
Discharged Oct 23, 1906.
Remarks:

C. E. Blackburn died March 12, 1922



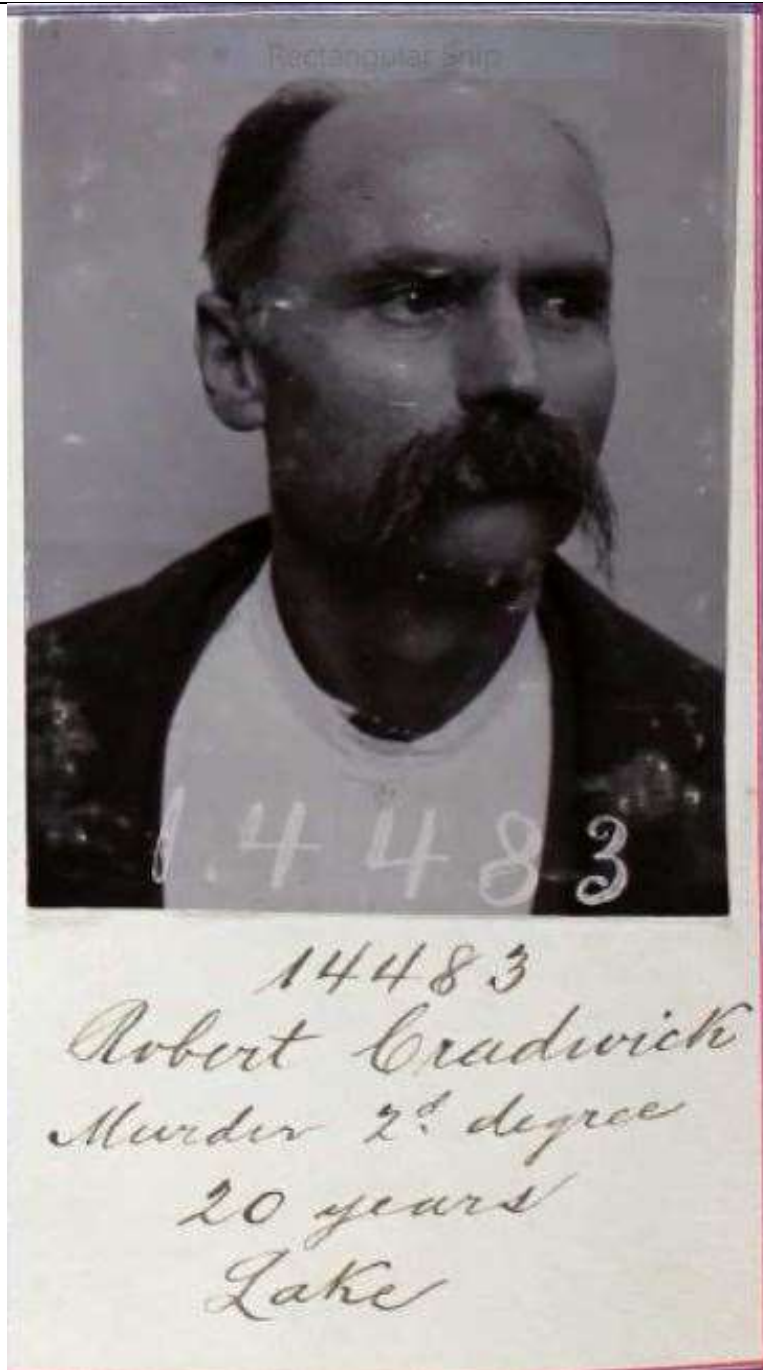
BENJAMIN F. STALEY:

B. F. Staley was born in New York, March 1854 and owned an interest in the Bullion mine. He was a friend of Thomas and Annie Habishaw who were the Riche's neighbors.

In February 1896, Staley filled an application to have his sentence commuted to no avail. Then in 1898 he requested a pardon that went no-where. In January 1902

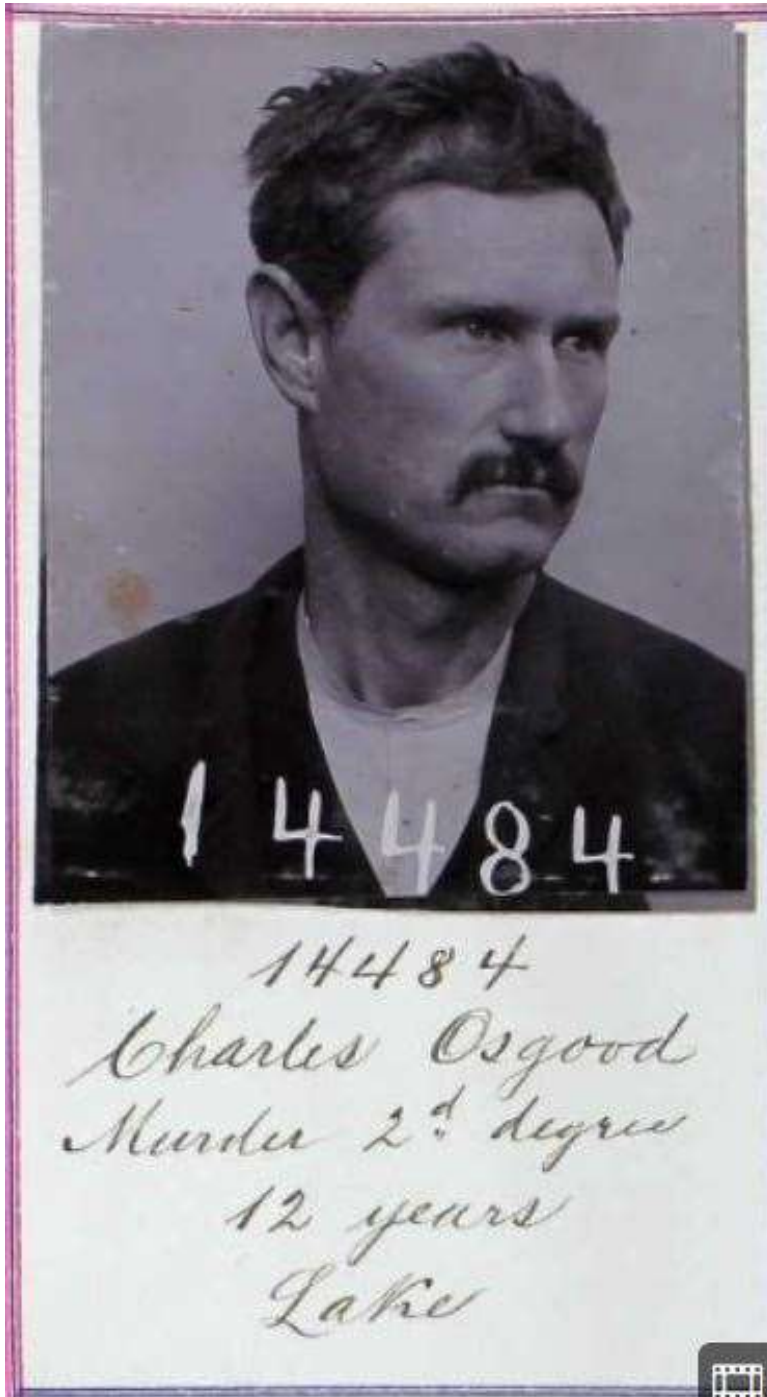
Robert Cradwick was paroled and Staley was offered parole. Steadfastly claiming his innocence he refused parole and requested he be pardoned. Finally in July of 1903 after serving twelve years and eight months of his twenty year sentence Benjamin F. Staley left San Quentin a free man enjoying the reputation of being the only convict who ever refused parole at the hands of the directors and he did so with indignation.

Of all those who went to San Quentin, Staley served the most time behind bars



ROBERT CRADWICK:

Robert Cradwick was from England. He was born in January 1847, he was about 43 years old at the time of the raid. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison for his part. He was paroled in January 1902.



CHARLES WALTER OSGOOD:

When Charles Walter Osgood was born on July 24, 1858, in Portland, Maine, his father, Cyrus, was 24 and his mother, Zilpha, was 21. Charles was the head engineer at the Bradford Mine and he married a local girl, Melinda Annette Farmer on July 21, 1886, in Middletown, California. They had three children during their

marriage. Sylvia Anita Osgood, born 1887; Walter Parris Osgood, born 1888; Byron C. Osgood, born 1890.

Charles was released from San Quentin in December of 1898 and always professed his innocence.

Charles Walter Osgood died on July 6, 1946, in Seattle, Washington, at the age of 87.

His wife, Melinda Annette Farmer was the daughter of William M. Farmer, born in Kentucky and Lucy Ann Fowler, born in Indiana, who were married in Rockport, Atchison County, Missouri in 1845.

In the 1850s, Lucy and William came West to California with the Fowler clan. They settled first in Clear Lake, then Coyote Valley, and finally in Middletown. Melinda A., born in Lake county, California, was one of nine children.

Melinda's father, William, was Postmaster in Clear Lake, Napa county, California in 1860 prior to the formation of Lake county.

Melinda's parents, Lucy and William Farmer are both buried in the Middletown Cemetery.

Because so many involved in this story have their final resting place in the Middletown Cemetery, I included the following.

MIDDLETOWN CEMETERY:

The land for the Middletown Cemetery was once part of the Reineke Family Ranch. In 1889 William Good donated the land to the Odd Fellows Lodge to be used as the Middletown Cemetery. Good was the brother-in-law of John Reineke, and they both worked in the blacksmith business which was across from Lobree.

On June 4, 1894 bodies buried within the town limits of Middletown, were approved for reburial elsewhere. One small cemetery was located at the Fiege Ranch, and the bodies were transferred to the new Middletown Cemetery. Bodies were also transferred from Middletown's first cemetery, which was a flat area alongside Rabbit Hill on the East side where the Standard Oil property was

located, to the new cemetery. Today, that property on the East side of Rabbit Hill is identified as, 21305 Stewart St.

Middletown Cemetery District was formed in 1966 to provide and maintain a local cemetery.

The original cemetery was 3+ acres, and in 1991 the District acquired the Catholic Cemetery that was 5+ acres.

Some of the largest headstones and markers in the Middletown Cemetery memorialize citizens of Middletown from its earliest time. Many are buried in the Evergreen and Magnolia sections of the cemetery.

Of course, over the years, others who influenced the direction Middletown would take are resting in other parts of the cemetery as well.

Hopefully now, after reading this trilogy of books, comes that certain day when you visit the Middletown Cemetery, some markers will speak to you differently, because, you are an informed member of the community that those resting there helped build.

In my humble opinion, Middletown has left its mark on Lake county history and I wish I could do more to reveal that proud part of America's legacy she added too by souls who broke trail for those who followed.

May God continue to Bless the United States of America

END OF STORY

Look for the next book titled: [ENGLISH](#)

ADDENDUM:

It is this authors opinion that McGuire Peak was named for the William Riley McGuire family. McGuire was the white cap who lost his life that fateful night.

DOCUMENTS

MURDER.

One Man and a Woman Fatally Shot.

THE "CAMPER'S RETREAT" INVADED.

Six Masked Men Commit a Dastardly Deed Near the Bradford Mine, Lake Co.

(FROM SATURDAY'S EXTRA.)

On the road leading from Colistown to
October 17, 1890

Stephen M Riche

BIRTH	1854 England
DEATH	29 Dec 1890 (aged 35–36) Middletown, Lake County, California, USA
BURIAL	<u>McIntire Ranch Cemetery</u> Lake County, California, USA
PLOT	111
MEMORIAL ID	143433062 · View Source

Stephen M. Thompson

BRADFORD'S SUMMER RESORT.

A GOOD PLACE FOR HUNTING AND TROUTING.
Is situated twelve miles from Calistoga, on the
Lakeport & Calistoga road. Lakeport and Harbin
Springs stages daily pass through this place. Team
and saddle horses are kept for the accommodation
of guests. Bradford's cannot be excelled for beau-
tiful mountain scenery.

E. J. BRADFORD, Prop.

August 24, 1877

BRADFORD'S.

SUMMER RESORT!

A Limited Number

of Guests can be accommodated at this place, 12
miles from Calistoga. Persons wishing to pass

THE SUMMER MONTHS

in the country, will find here a pleasant location,
healthful climate and delightful scenery; a
well furnished house,

Good Fare and Commodious Rooms!

A fine piano, croquet ground, and facilities for

HUNTING AND TROUTING!

Daily Stages to all parts.

Mrs. E. W. BRADFORD, Proprietress.

Quicksilver Shipments.

During the month of July, quicksilver from the mines mentioned was sent from Calistoga to San Francisco:

Bradford Bros. Mine.....	(flasks)	411
Napa Consolidated.....	"	248
Sulphur Bank.....	"	110
Gt. Western.....	"	84
Total for month,		800

August 1888

Quicksilver Mine Sold.

CALISTOGA, Nov. 23. — The **Bradford** quicksilver mine, together with the lands surrounding, has been sold by the **Bradford** family and associates in business to D. O. Mills of New York, J. B. Randol, Superintendent of the New Almaden quicksilver mine in Santa Clara County, and Thomas Bell, formerly interested in the Idria quicksilver mine. The price paid has not been made public, but is presumed to be large.

November 1891

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

* * Of the * *

* GREAT * WESTERN * QUICKSILVER * MINE, *

* * * Lake County, California. * * *

Calistoga, Cal. Aug 10th 1891.

Mrs Sherrington

Dear Madam

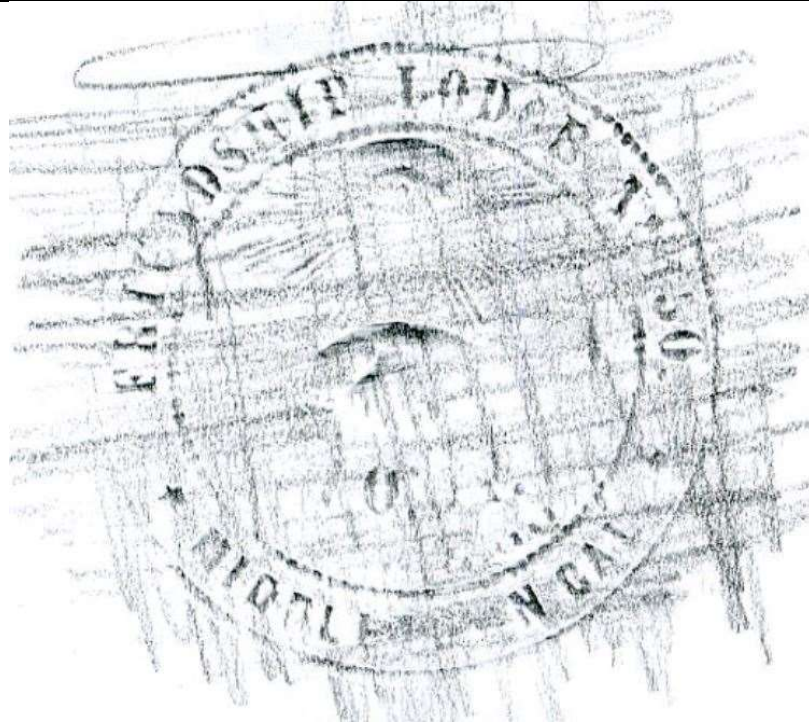
I have rec'd a letter from your son in law stating that you would probably not come to Cal and requesting a statement of the standing of the Thompson estate. There is an indebtedness above a small amount already collected of \$1050⁰⁰ One thousand and fifty dollars

The assets are the place the piano, and Mrs Thompsons jewelry. As you will understand I have to follow the course of the law, and the estate must be settled very soon as the creditors are anxious for their money I have also written to this effect to C Sherrington of Chicago. Awaiting your immediate reply I remain

Respectfully yours
Andrew Rocca



Mrs Sherrington
Argyle Lodge
Gipsy Hill
Upper Norwood London. S.E.



IOOF
Odd Fellows
Seal of the Friendship Lodge #150
Middletown, Cal

CREDITS

INDIVIDUAL SOURCES:

- EDWIN WINK
- HELEN ROCCA GOSS
- MARK SHEPHARD
- GEOFFREY E. SHERINGTON
- BRUCE B. SHERINGTON
- THE READ FAMILY

INTERNET:

- ANCESTORY.COM
- NEWSPAPERS.COM
- FIND A GRAVE.COM

- MERRIAM-WESTER
- WIKIPEDIA
- WORLD WIDE WEB

AGENCIES:

- MIDDLETOWN CEMETERY DISTRICT
- COUNTY OF LAKE
- STATE OF CALIFORNIA
- USGS

PRINT MEDIA:

- MIDDLETOWN INDEPENDENT
- CALISTOGIAN
- SAINT HELENA STAR
- NAPA REGISTER
- SONOMA DEMOCRAT
- RUSSIAN RIVER FLAG
- MORNING UNION
- DAILY ALTA
- SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
- SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER
- SAN FRANCISCO CALL
- UKIAH DAILY JOURNAL

This is the third of four books I wanted to write regarding local history. The first book was MURDER IN THE MAYACAMAS a work of fiction but steeped in facts regarding a local murder that happened November 20, 1966.

My second book was about the history of Guenoc Ranch and my experiences there. It was titled: GUENOC RANCH & The Days Of The Flying Muleshoe

And now this book about a group of local hard rock miners who set out to “get-even” with one man, instead, it ended with the murder of an innocent woman, one of the eleven raiders and it ruined the lives of many Middletown residents.

CINNABAR

The Saga of the White Cap Murders.



Cinnabar Sample, Great Western Mine, Middletown

SPACE

READ MORE LOCAL HISTORY

[Guenoc Ranch and the Days Of The flying Muleshoe 2nd Edition](#)

[The Story Of Thomas Kearney Dye](#)

[The Story Of Joseph Getz](#)

[The Murder Of Ham Herrick](#)

[Butts Canyon Road](#)

[The Old Soldier Road](#)

[The English Family Outlaws](#)

[Murder In The Mayacamas the unsolved murder of Joan \(Hamann\) Dole](#)

[Lawley Toll Road](#)

[Mountain Mill House](#)

[Mt. St Helena](#)

[Fire!! Middletown Is Burning](#)

[The Story of George Coburn](#)

[HOME](#)

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Free counters provided by [Andale](#)