

BROWNLEE'S SHOT-GUN.

As Depicted In The Napa Register May 17, 1895
The Napa Register wrote: "*Buchanan "Buck" English comes from one of the worst families in this section of the country. The father was a desperado and several of his brothers met with violent deaths.*"

DEDICATION:

To all those men and women who say “good-by” to their loved ones daily, not knowing if this will be the final good-by, as they go off to enforce the law and protect American citizens.

This book is dedicated to all our law enforcement officers across this great country, the United States of America. May God Bless you and keep you safe.

ENGLISH

2nd Edition

Copyright © 2019 – 2021 Bill Wink

Publisher:

Bill Wink

P.O. Box 814

Middletown, CA 95461

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, modified, rewritten, stored in a retrieval system, or transferred in any form, by any means, including mechanical, electric, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the express prior written permission of the publisher.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

First printing, 2019

2nd Edition 2021

Library of Congress Control Number: 00000000000

OTHER BOOKS PUBLISHED BY THIS AUTHOR:

THE INDIVIDUALIST – Lifting the fog of confusion

TREASON – The companion book

MURDER IN THE MAYACAMAS – A short story

GUENOC RANCH & The Days of the Flying-Muleshoe – A Historical Regard

CINNABAR & The Saga of the White Cap Murders

FIRE Middletown Is Burning

X They Left Their Mark On South Lake County

CONTENTS:

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	5
THE FINAL CHAPTER	7
BUCK WAS NOTORIOUS	20
BUCK CAME BY IT NATURALLY	26
ENGLISH	38
OTHERS	45
MUGSHOTS	48
DOCUMENTS	50
ADDENDUM	54
CREDITS	63
BONUS:	
THE STORY OF GEORGE COBURN	64
INTRODUCTION	65
THE GEORGE COBURN STORY	69
EPILOGUE	82
CREDITS	84

INTRODUCTION:

MAY 1895:

It was going to be an exciting day for some folks who lived in the San Francisco, California area, as these folks were going to become tourists starting an adventure that would have them use three different types of transportation to reach their final destination.

The tourists would leave San Francisco for Lake county early in the morning and take the ferry-boat to Vallejo. At Vallejo they would catch the train and journey north to Calistoga. There, they would catch a stagecoach for the final leg of their journey to Lake county.

In the 1890s a young woman wrote of her trip to Lake county from San Francisco. It was published in the Pomo Bulletin. I used some of her actual description to give the reader a feeling for what she really felt it was like to make the journey.

Napa Register Friday, May 17, 1895

“Early in the afternoon of Tuesday a heavy three seated stage on the Calistoga and Clear Lake line filled with tourists from San Francisco was stopped by

two masked robbers and all the valuables belonging to the passengers were taken by the highwaymen.”

ENGLISH

THE FINAL CHAPTER

After a pleasant but chilly trip to Vallejo by ferry, the tourist soon learn their next experience, train travel, leaves much to be desired. If a person opens the window of the rail car, cinders blow in, and if the windows are left closed, the air becomes stale and odoriferous.

On this particular day, in a corner of the rail car there were a group of men boisterously playing cards and occasionally making the spittoons ring with their wads of tobacco. When the conductor came through with refreshments that could be purchased, the card players practically cleaned him out of the miniature whiskey bottles leaving others, whose stomachs were upset, without any medicinal relief.

At the end of their railroad trip they find the stage is waiting for them in the little town of Calistoga with some passengers already on board. It is 16 feet long and 12 feet high, a three seater, so covered with dust that one cannot tell if it has been painted or left with varnish over the original wood. The rear wheels are 6 feet high and tower over the skinny driver; the front

wheels are smaller being only around 4 feet in diameter. There are three span of horses.

Welcome to the Spier's stage line from Calistoga to Clear Lake. The fee is \$7.00 round trip, they board the stage, while the driver, A. L. Palmer and his helper store their luggage in the boot.

The driver climbs on board and the ladies all adjust their dusters. All the passengers brace themselves. "Gee-haw!" Palmer shouts along with the crack of his whip and the stage lurches forward, throwing them all into each other's laps. They are now no longer strangers after this rude introduction.

The Lawley Toll Road over Mount Saint Helena is narrow and winding, twisting torturously up the narrow mountain gorges and down the steep canyons. Dust boils up around the stage. Its leather thongs, which are its only springs, do their best, but the passengers bounce at every chuckhole and occasionally some fly upward to bump their heads on the roof when the big wheels strike an immovable rock buried in their path.

There are times when the wheels of the coach go dangerously near to the edge of the cliff, which seems to go straight down and the whole body sways so as to give the impression they are sure to go over. Coming

around a narrow curve the coach almost collides with a buggy drawn by a single horse. It is such a close call that the buggy is forced to drive so that the wheel is partially up the side of the bank. Words were exchanged by the two drivers and it wasn't "good-morning".

Oh, where are those small bottles of whiskey now, the tourist opine!

One of the gentlemen passengers explains that no one should be concerned for this is one of the best drivers on the route and one of the most experienced teams. The two rear animals are chosen for their size, being larger than the ones in front. On sharp turns the driver allows the horses to deal with the situation and the leaders pick up speed, swinging out, while the wheelers hold back just enough to keep the stage under control.

At about six miles an hour, it is about a two hour trip from Calistoga over the mountain to the Mirabel mine in Lake county (previously the Bradford mine). Occasionally the driver pulls up and the ladies "go pick wildflowers" and the gentlemen "go shoot rabbits". There is a water bag on the coach from which to take a drink.

As they make their descent toward Troutdale Creek the trip over Mount Saint Helena is nearly over. Beyond the creek, the terrain takes on a gentle slope as it nears Lake county but this is the place where most hold-ups happen.

This day would be one of those days. The highwaymen strike between Troutdale Creek and the Lake county line while the coach is still in Napa county and about 1 ½ miles from the Mirabel mine.

Both robbers were wearing masks and each was nearly covered with a dark gray duster. They wore wide brimmed felt black hats, commonly called “slouch hats”. Both had old Colt revolvers and one also had a shotgun. The taller, older of the two gave all the orders demanding the driver throw down the strong box. They cursed a lot at the passengers and were especially abusive of an older celestial from Napa.

The stage driver was sure he recognized the taller one of the robbers as Buck English. Buck had worked for “Red Hot” Bill Spiers before and Bill knew him well from Middletown, where Buck even had a more troubling reputation.

In all, about \$1,200 was secured from the pockets of the passengers and it is unknown how much was taken from the Wells Fargo Express strong box. Some of the

loot was gold coins and a monogrammed gold watch, which would be easily identifiable as it said: E. J. Lynch compliments of P.H.A.A. H. J. Gerdes, a passenger, was separated from his belongs as was everyone else. Also, the identification papers of the old Chinaman were in with his other belongings the robbers took. He was one of the only ones to resist having his belongings taken from him.

Suddenly two teams show-up, one driven by Byrd Hunt and the other by an unidentified man. They were stopped and robbed as well.

It was over in a few minutes and the highwaymen ordered the stage and the two teams to head for Middletown and they, the highway-men, went the other way.

On arriving in Middletown, Lake and Napa officials were notified by telephone and a posse from Calistoga and one from Middletown went in pursuit.

A \$200 reward was offered for their capture.

About two hours after the holdup the robbers were seen passing through Adolph Sutro's place, on foot, heading east for Oat Hill, Napa county.

Word came in the next day that the two robbers had made it to the Berryessa Valley area and had taken supper at P. D. Grigsby's and then breakfast at Charles Moore's and it looked like they were going to catch the Monticello stage to Napa. From there they would probably go on to San Francisco and catch a steamer back to Portland from whence they came.

Johnny Gardner was the driver of the Monticello stage, he stated that on Thursday morning Charles Moore had told him that the robbers had had breakfast at his place and that they would ride down on the stage. Gardner says he set out around 6:30 a.m. and he passed them on the road but didn't take them on until Pratt's place. There he sent word to Constable Phelan, through some school children, about what he was doing and Phelan telephoned Napa.

Bill Spiers from Middletown told a correspondent of the Los Angeles Herald what happened next regarding the pursuit of the robbers. Spiers said that under-Sheriff Brownlee got the message that came from Johnny Gardner and he said: *"I'm a-goin' to catch that fella"* and he piled some friends of his into a two seated surrey that was standing there. The men were Jack True, Jim Gardner, Johnny Williams and Theodore Bell. Brownlee says: *"We'll scoot around the mountain and like as not we'll catch these fellas on the Berryessa grade."*

Johnny Gardner, the Monticello Stage driver, made a statement, he said: *"At Windy Flat the two men paid their fare to Napa, \$1.50 apiece. Then they went in and got some beer. We met Charley and Jack Farley with a team south of Jack Raney's place. They jokingly said "You'll be held up today" not knowing the two robbers were aboard.*

The man sitting with me on the driver's seat held his shotgun across his knee the whole time. That man was Buck English.

It's about 8 miles from Pratt's to the Berryessa grade, the scene of the fight. When we met the officers I looked right at Johnny Williams and he looked at Buck English. I didn't know the officers were in that carriage. The first I knew a gun in each party moved. Williams and English shooting at about the same time, being about 6 or 8 feet apart.

Soon Bell shot, hitting English in the back of the hip. I was turned partly around looking backwards and got some of the shot in the thigh. After Bell shot English, English drew a revolver, shoved it in my ribs and told me to drive faster. I went on and stopped just below the cold spring where the robber had said he was dying and fainted."

English's first shot was bird-shot which did strike Sheriff Brownlee and Williams but the main blast of shot hit the butt of Brownlee's shotgun that he was holding between his knees, while driving, and the impact threw him out of the carriage.

Then Bell got out of the rig to get a better shot and just then the younger robber bailed from the stage and made a run for the brush but was stopped by a shot from Jack True's rifle.

That impact took the fight out of the young robber and he threw his hands in the air shouting "*Don't shoot, don't shoot.*" After rounding him up they lit out after the stage soon catching up to it finding English passed out leaning against the driver Johnny Gardner.

Brownlee and True took charge of the younger robber transporting him to Napa in the carriage while Williams and Bell took charge of the stage transporting the two wounded men English and Gardner.

When the shooting was over it seems William's first shot struck English in the arm and the second shot hit his left side. Bell shot English in the hip and also hit the stage driver Gardner in the thigh. Jack True grazed the young robber with a rifle ball in the leg. Brownlee,

Williams and True received slight wounds from scattering shot.

Dr. Hennessey said Gardner, the stage driver, was hit by 6 buckshot, two passed clear through his leg and he removed the others.

Sheriff McKenzie called S. W. Kenyon and William Spiers to come to Napa and identify the men. Both men recognized English from knowing him in Lake county but did not recognize the younger robber.

In the interview with the Los Angeles Herald, Bill Spiers told the story this way: *"He was badly hurt but game, and when I went in he never said a word. I pulled his hat off and looked at his head and saw that he was pretty bald, with a little lock of hair in front. I said to him, 'now let me see your hand and see if the scar that you got the time you grabbed the Indian's knife is there.'*

" 'For God's sake, Bill,' he says, 'don't give me away.'

" 'You bet I will,' I says, and went on out and told the boys they had Buck English right enough."

It was reported that the next day Buck English's conditioned had worsened. Dr. Springsteen stated that he thought some of the shot struck the lower part of

Buck's lung. That there were indications of pneumonia settling in and English was spitting up blood.

Buck commented that he wasn't too worried as his brother Charlie had been shot in the chest through the lung in a shoot-out in Napa's Spanish-town March 14, 1868 and wasn't expected to live, however, he did and so too did Buck English.

Later Deputy Sheriff Brownlee would comment that *"English was about the coolest man he had ever encountered. He displayed great nerve when told to throw up his hands. He is a tough case. He was sent to State's Prison several years ago for cattle stealing and is equal to anything in the criminal line."*

The Napa Register wrote: *"Buchanan "Buck" English comes from one of the worst families in this section of the country. The father was a desperado and several of his brothers met with violent deaths."*

Morning Union, 10 July 1895

Buck English Gets a Life Sentence.

NAPA (Cal.), July 10. —"Buck English, the stage robber, was arraigned in the Superior Court this morning before Judge Ham. He plead guilty to the charge, time for sentence., and the Court sentenced him to life imprisonment at San Quentin. Sheriff McKenzie takes him down to prison this evening."

This wasn't Buck's first sentence to San Quentin, however, it looked like it could be his last.

Buck had been sentenced to San Quentin twice before. Once on October 25, 1876 for 2 counts of grand larceny by the county of Lake. That sentence was for 2 ½ years. He was discharged after 7 months on May 31, 1877.

Then Lake county sent him back on January 29, 1878 for 7 years for robbery. He was discharged October 29, 1882 just 3 months short of serving 4 years.

The younger highwayman was 5'8", 165 pound, 23 year old Richard N. Breckenridge from Oregon. Breckenridge and English had teamed up there as English had family in Roseburg. Breckenridge had a record, he had been in reform school and spent time in the state penitentiary for robbing a warehouse. Breckenridge was sentenced to 25 years in San Quentin but was released in 1910 with time off for good behavior.

Sacramento Union, 22 January 1912

Old-Time Bandit Will Leave Prison On Parole
SAN QUENTIN. Jan. 21.—“The Lamplighter of San
Quentin,” as “Buck” English, life-termer, 62 years

old, has been familiarly known for years, will not be seen about the penitentiary after February 1st. At that time he will become a paroled man, after having served seventeen years of a life sentence for participation in a daring hold-up of the Lake county stage near St. Helena twenty years ago. English for years has held the position of lamplighter, making the rounds of the prison grounds every night and seeing that all the lights were in trim. R. N. Breckenridge, English's partner in the hold-up, was released from the penitentiary last year, having served a twenty-five-year sentence, less time for good behavior."

Morning Union, 21 January 1915

Bandit, Dying, Says Crime Does Not Pay
SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 20.—“Crime doesn't pay, I only wish that I might have seen things forty years ago in the light that I see them today.” That was one of the last things uttered by Lawrence B. English, better known as “Buck,” one of California's noted stage robbers, before he died Friday at the city and county hospital. Many friends of English, who came to know him after his release from San Quentin two years ago, attended his funeral.”

Lawrence Buchanan “Buck” English died 14 Jan 1915 (aged 59–60) San Francisco, San Francisco County, California. He is buried in the Holy Cross Catholic

Cemetery, Colma, San Mateo County, California,
Section A, Row 19, Grave 141.

BUCK WAS NOTORIOUS

Born Lane Buchanan English, 1855, in Polk, Oregon Territory, to Benjamin Franklin English and his wife Pauline Lillian Durbin, he was the youngest of 12 children. He changed his name from Lane to Lawrence, but went by "Buck" to family and friends. Buck and several of his brothers became outlaws in the northwest including Lake and Napa Counties of California, with Buck being the most notorious of the bunch.

In 1876, prior to Buck being sentenced to San Quentin in October, a woman wrote a letter to the Sonoma Democrat about an incident that happened on the main street of Middletown involving Buck. She wrote:

“On Sunday evening, the 11th (of May), one of those disgraceful scenes occurred which, though common in earlier days are now entirely below par and discountenanced by all law-abiding and law-loving citizens. It was nothing more nor less than a shooting scrape in the main street. The particulars of the case are these; Last fall L. B. Buck, “English” as he is generally called, took a strong dislike to the Good Templars of Middletown and vicinity. He was not as popular with the Good Templar ladies as he desired. One night at a social dance in Middletown he in company with some others broke the violin, fired off

his six-shooter on the steps of the house, simply because he had received no invitation to the party. Soon after he had some trouble with one F. Prebble, because he was a Good Templar; abused Prebble on every chance and finally one night as Prebble was entering the Lake County House, Buck struck him from behind. Prebble fired a shot which missed Buck. Buck was arrested, fined a small sum. Sunday, he met John Good, a prominent Good Templar and against whom Buck had made some threats months ago but as they had never had any words or trouble, Good held no grudge against him at all and when they met on the sidewalk in front of Cassidy's saloon Good spoke friendly: "How are you Buck?" Buck answered with some insulting vulgarity, following it up with some personal abuse and finally told Good that if he would walk back behind the saloon he would whip him. Although Good is not quarrelsome neither is he cowardly, and followed Buck back of the saloon, where Buck proceeded to dish out considerable abuse which Good took, intending only to act on the defensive. They soon separated, Good going down the street towards the residence of his brother-in-law. Buck took a seat on the porch of Cassidy's saloon, informing the crowd that he was waiting for John Good to pass. About 7 o'clock p. m., only a short time after, Good started up the street. When Buck saw him coming he ran back of the saloon, entered Harris' saloon and advanced to the center of the room and

cocked his six-shooter. Then he walked to the door and leveled his pistol at Good and asked, "Are you ready?" At the same time he pulled the trigger. Good stopped, drew his pistol, and coolly returned the fire. Buck was partly concealed by the door, and it is said he sprang behind the door when Good fired at him. At least he was not hit and fired a second shot which took effect in Good's right wrist, weakening it so much that he had to hold his right hand up with the left at every shot he fired. Soon after he was hit just above the left knee making a serious flesh wound, but breaking no bones. As soon as Buck fired the second shot Joe Conway told him to go out of his house. He then stepped out on the sidewalk and behind an oak tree to which several horses were tied. During the shooting Buck's pistol was shot out of his hand and he placed his hand on his left breast. It is generally supposed he was wounded, but his friends say not, however, when his pistol fell, Charley his brother, handed him another. Good fired six shots. He is an A No. 1 shot but owing to the shelter Buck took and it being pretty dark he couldn't get his man. Eye-witnesses say his courage will stand the test. As soon as his pistol was empty he went across the street and got a room in the Lake County House, where a physician dressed his wounds. "English" returned with two pistols, one only partly emptied and the other loaded ; leaving one on the porch floor, and jumping on a horse he rode off.

No warrant is out yet that we have heard of. Good is getting along as well as could be expected."

THE LOS ANGELES HERALD

"Red Hot" Bill Spiers, as they call him up in Lake County, was in Los Angeles Tuesday. He owns the Calistoga stage line and is one of the old timers who freighted gold and braved the terrors of Buck English and his gang. He has a fund of reminiscences of the old days when Lake county was really bad, and has seen gunplay without end and has been in some of them himself. In all the years he drove the stage himself no curt-voiced man ever stepped out in front of his horses and said "hands up." For Bill was something of a handy man with shooting irons himself and was more apt to fight than quietly submit. But, notwithstanding the reputation that he had for fighting, his stage was held up seven times during the years that Buck English managed to stay out of jail. Six times the hold-ups went through easily and no one was ever caught, but in the end the game was too recklessly played."

In the Los Angeles Herald's interview with William 'Bill' Spiers he related the following story:

Buck English had driven a stage team for many years in company with Spiers. They got to know each other well and to respect each other for both were fearless

men but there was something bad in Buck that was bound to crop out in the end, and one day he ran off some cattle that didn't belong to him and sold them, and after that became a "hold-up-man". The first man English met after it had been discovered that he was a cattle thief was Spiers, and the meeting was dramatic to the highest degree.

"I was driving my freight team up to Middletown one day," says Spiers, when I heard a horse coming up ahead of me and coming fast. I don't know what made me do it, but I reached down in the boot and pulled my gun up so the handle was in easy reach and then a man came tearing "round the trail ahead of me riding his horse for all that was in him. When he got close to me he pulled his horse back on his haunches and poked a gun right in my face." I saw the horse was winded and saw the man was Buck English, so I reached over as if I was reaching for my money but I got my gun and put it right on Buck and says, "You better put that gun up or I'll shoot you in the eye." He looked at me and then he dropped his gun. "I kind o' thought It was a joke, but when he'd dropped his gun he says: 'Ain't you a-goin' to let me have some money Bill?' I reckon not, I says. You kind of scares me when you asks that way." He didn't stop a minute, but went right on and then, after I'd gone about a half a mile some deputy sheriffs rode up and asked me if I'd seen Buck English. "I reckon yes, I says, and told them where he'd gone but

he got away from them and after that my stages began to be held up. We thought Buck was doing all the business but couldn't prove it on him until one day two fellows put a hold-up through and one man on the stage that knew Buck English well recognized him.”

BUCK CAME BY IT NATURALLY

In 1848 John Stilts settled in Green Valley, California, which after California became a state would be part of Solano county. He was followed there a short time later by W. P. Durbin from Missouri and Charles Ramsey.

Warren Perry, or, W. P. Durbin, was the brother of Pauline Lillian Durbin who was married to Benjamin Franklin English, the Englishes had also left Missouri and were at this time already living in the Oregon Territory.

Benjamin Franklin English was born in 1813 in Madison, Kentucky. When he was twenty he met and married Pauline Lillian Durbin on August 9th, 1833 in Clay Missouri, Pauline's home state. They had 12 children over the next 22 years.

In 1845 they pulled up stakes and headed for Oregon.

In 1850, seventeen years after their marriage in Missouri, the family is counted in the Polk, Oregon Territory census. The children then were; David English, 16; Paulina English, 15; Daniel Durbin English, 14; Sarah English, 12; Charles English, 10; Benjamin F. English, 8; Warren Perry English, 7; Thisley Jane English, 5 and Lucy F. English, 2.

David, Paulina, Daniel, Sarah, Charles, Benjamin and Warren were born in Missouri. Thisley Jane was born on the Oregon Trail in 1845. Lucy and three more children were born in Oregon. The next three children were Harmon, Eugene and Lane (Lawrence) Buchanan 'Buck' English.

Most of the English family stayed in Oregon until 1863 when they moved to California to an area near where Pauline's brother, W. P. Durbin then lived, Green Valley, Solano county.

Before this time, 1863, David English, the eldest son, had developed an unsavory reputation for himself. He was ranked amongst the baddest-of-the-bad-guys.

Following is a list of a few of the prominent characters who participated in the drama of murder and robbery during the early mining days of the northwest: Cherokee Bob, Henry Plummer, Bill Bunton, Charley Ridgley, Reeves, Charley Harper, Mayfield, Ferd Patterson, Hickey, Matt Bledsoe, David English, William Peoples, Nelson Scott, Bill Willoughby, Boone Helm and Dutch Fred.

David English, William Peoples and Nelson Scott, a notorious trio, robbed a packer of 100 ounces of gold-dust between Lewiston and Florence Idaho. They were

arrested at Walla Walla, Washington, returned to Lewiston but taken from the sheriff and lynched by vigilantes made of a company of expressmen and others. This happened on November 15, 1862, in Lewiston, Idaho. David was 28.

Prior to California becoming a State, all early settler's property rights were afforded them under Mexican law.

During that time the land to settler ratio was so great no-one worried about a few acres here or there as there was plenty for everyone. However, once California became a state in 1850 everything changed. This issue of "title" to the land became a sometimes violent issue as everyone pushed and shoved to protect what each thought was rightfully theirs.

Many newcomers were considered "squatters" by the earlier settlers whose land title was afforded them by the Mexican authorities.

Before the English family relocated to California, in the year 1861, the bloodiest four years in American history began. It started when Confederate shore batteries under General P.G.T. Beauregard opened fire on the Union-held Fort Sumter in South Carolina's Charleston Bay. During the next 34 hours, 50 Confederate guns and mortars launched more than

4,000 rounds at the poorly supplied fort. On April 13, U.S. Major Robert Anderson surrendered the fort. Two days later, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteer soldiers to quell the Southern “insurrection.”

South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas were the original secessionist. Then Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina also declared their secession and joined the Confederacy. The Confederacy later accepted Missouri and Kentucky as members, although neither officially declared secession nor were they ever largely controlled by Confederate forces but feelings were strong amongst those loyal to the south who were living in Green Valley, Solano county, California. Counted among these were W. P. Durbin and his family.

It was said no Republican or Union sympathizer was ever safe in Green Valley during this time.

1865 APRIL 27 SACRAMENTO DAILY UNION

“Green Valley, in Solano county, is infested with some of the boldest Secessionists on this coast. Ever since the war commenced, they have been open and loud mouthed in their abuse of the Government, and have made it a custom to shout for Jeff Davis and his tribe on every occasion. Upon the receipt of the news of the

dastardly assassination of Lincoln, these men, true to their instincts, collected together and rejoiced over the fiendish act. The military authorities at Benicia were notified of what was going on by some of the Union citizens, and a company was sent to the spot. Upon the arrival of the troops, the ringleaders fortified themselves in the house of David James, in the upper part of the valley. As the troops approached the premises they were fired upon and two of the soldiers wounded. The fire was returned, and two of the traitors wounded, when the whole secesh party surrendered and were brought to Benicia yesterday morning, The prisoners are David James and two sons, William P. Durbin and son, Charles Ramsey and son, A. O. Laramel and son. and John Stilts. They will be tried for treason, the penalty for which is death.”

This above related episode came as the result of the whole property rights issue.

B. F. English and two sons, Charles and Perry were cutting wood on property they claimed. During a trial, under oath, Charles stated: *“We came to Solano Co. about two years ago; I and my father bought a settler’s claim to a piece of the Soscol Rancho and have been cutting wood from it; [we] were enjoined by Eastman; Stilts and Durbin went on the injunction bond against us; there is a bitter feud between the Englishes and the Durbins; we have not spoken for years.”*

Without doubt this just added to the already existing hard feelings between the Englishes and their relatives, the Durbins.

After the Englishes were stopped from cutting wood, Charles English made a complaint to the military authorities of Benicia, and caused the arrest of Durbin, Ramsey, Laramel, Stilts and others for shouting over the assassination of President Lincoln. This further inflamed the situation.

Then the Sonoma Democrat reported the outcome of the arrest of the so-called traitors.

SONOMA DEMOCRAT, 26 AUGUST 1865

“On the fourth day of the trial, a telegraphic dispatch ordering that all the prisoners be turned over to Judge Hoffman, U. S. District Judge; which was accordingly done, and within ten minutes alter his civil authorities had control of them they were discharged on taking of the oath of allegiance. In a country like ours, where the military is, by constitutional provision, made subordinate to the civil power, and where the great mass of our people are trained to watch with a jealous eye the slightest encroachment upon civil rights, the duty of a military commander is a very delicate one, and his errors, if he commit any, should be viewed with the greatest leniency. At the same time, any

unwarranted interference with the person or property of the citizen should receive such mild but positive rebuke as will henceforth deter others, who chance to hold temporary command, from forgetting that the house of an American citizen is his castle, and he who dares to invade it without warrant or just cause, should have hurled upon his head the condemnation of every lover of individual liberty. The whole testimony tend to show that the military authorities at Benicia were deceived into making these arrests by a party or class of persons called "Squatters," who thought to take advantage of the popular excitement consequent upon a great national calamity, to vent their rage upon the landholders —it being well known that all the persons arrested are old and prominent citizens of the county who purchased and paid for their lands under the Mexican grant years before any idea was ever entertained that the title would be rejected."

September 6th, 1865 was election day. The polling place for the Green Valley precinct, was at Cordelia, Solano county. B. F. English and several of his sons travelled the 3 miles to Cordelia to vote as did the Durbin clan. Women could not vote until 1920, some 55 years later.

Late in the afternoon, when the excitement that always attended elections in those days was at its height, the pent-up hatred that had rankled in the breasts of the

members of the two families could no longer be controlled, and the young men became involved in desperate conflict. On one side was arrayed B. F. English and his sons, and on the other side his nephews, the Durbins. W. P. Durbin was not present.

Here is how it was described in 1865:

“This was a cutting affair which occurred at the election polls at Bridgeport, on the 6th of September, 1865, in which a man named English was killed and two others fearfully wounded, while a third received two shots in his breast and shoulder from a pistol. The circumstances attending the confrontation are briefly these: About this time English and his two sons, Charles and Perry, were cutting wood on land owned by Perry Durbin, and the latter restrained them by injunction, on account of which, it is supposed Charles English made complaint to the military authorities at Benicia and caused the arrest of Durbin, Ramsey, Laramel, Stilts and others for rejoicing over the assassination of President Lincoln. While at the polls, as above stated, English and Durbin were conversing; English gave the lie to Durbin; Durbin made a motion as of drawing a weapon, whereupon Charles English drew his revolver and commenced firing, two of the shots taking effect upon Durbin, hitting him in the left breast and shoulder. Durbin then drawing his knife, turned upon Charles, who, in attempting to escape, ran out of doors, but stumbled and fell, and

commenced cutting at his throat, presenting a most horrible sight. Perry English on seeing his brother in a critical position, ran to his assistance, but just as he reached the contending parties, Frank Grady drew his revolver and shot Perry just back and under his right ear, killing him instantly. Grady mounted his horse and left for parts unknown. The father then went to the relief of his son Charles, when Durbin turned upon the old man, and stabbed him in the breast three times, making fearful wounds. In due course Grady was captured and twice tried, when on 19th September, 1866, he was acquitted.”

Warren Perry English was deceased, B. F. suffered some gruesome wounds and Charles, although wounded, was arrested for shooting Perry Durbin, his cousin. Charley was sentenced to San Quentin state prison November, 1865 for the shooting.

Notice, the one who committed the murder of an English was acquitted and the man who shot and wounded a Durbin, Charley English, went to San Quentin.

Charley was released in 1868 and met up with his older brother Daniel and another cousin, Sim Durbin, in Napa where they proceeded to hit the saloons and gaming houses for the next week. They were joined by some disreputable cohorts, one named Bulger Kains a

supposed horse thief and gun-fighter and friend of Daniels. Kains was proud of his reputation as it gave him a sort of standing among those who straddled the line between law abiding and lawlessness, but there were those who claimed to have known him before his advent in Napa, and they said he was only a bluffer and a coward. This estimate of Kains' character was soon proven to be correct by an incident that occurred in Napa soon after English's return from the Penitentiary.

The Sacramento Daily Union, in 1895, related the story this way:

"In 1868 in one corner of Napa was then a Spanish settlement known as "Spanish-town." It was made up of tough characters, both men and women. Nearly every cabin was a dance-house, and whisky was freely sold at all of them. Whenever the Sheriff of a neighboring county wanted to capture a skulking criminal, he invariably sought this Napa suburb, and seldom failed to find his man there. Kains and the two Englishes were frequent visitors to Spanish-town and one night they went there apparently for the purpose of raising a row with the locals and displaying their prowess as gun-fighters. They induced Durbin and a youth named Al Haines, formerly of Sacramento, to accompany them. Some hours were spent in dancing and drinking, when near midnight a row was started. Kains was said to have precipitated the trouble with a

local, but us soon as the latter began to unload their batteries he skulked away, followed by Durbin and Haines, leaving the two English boys to fight it out. And fight it out they did to the last. Whatever else may be said of the English boys, there was never a member of that family who knew what cowardice meant. When word was brought into town, a few hundred yards away, that the Englishes had been killed in Spanish-town, the saloons were emptied in a jiffy. Everyone who was not in bed hastened to the scene of the shooting:, where a gory sight met their gaze. On the floor of one of the dance-houses lay Daniel English dead in a big pool of blood. He lay on his side, where he had fallen, his legs drawn up as if in the act of springing at some foe when a bullet struck and tore away one side of his lower jaw ripping a hole in his jugular. His right hand firmly grasped a long bowie-knife which he had been unable to use before he was shot down. Stretched on the floor in the opposite direction, with his head nearly touching that of his brother, lay Charlie English, the one who had but just been released from prison. He lay upon his back, with a bullet-hole in his right breast. He was not dead, but when Dr. Stillwater turned him over and saw another hole under his shoulder-blade, where the bullet had made its exit, he said the man could not live. But he did not die. Although shot through the right lung, he recovered, and for many years afterward was about his old haunts. He is the brother referred to by the

Napa stage robber, "Buck" English, when he said, after an operation had been performed on him: "I think I shall live. A brother of mine was shot through the lungs once, and after being operated on in this way he recovered."

Daniel D. English left a wife and three children. He apparently relocated to California ahead of the family as his address in the 1860 census was Ukiah, Mendocino county, California. His wife's name was Mons Ning.

ENGLISH

Benjamin Franklin English Sr. was born in Madison county, Kentucky, September 8, 1815, to Mr. & Mrs. Charles English. The English family would leave Kentucky in 1818 and move to Missouri where they would live in several counties in that state before settling. In 1833 B. F. English was in Clay county Missouri where he met, fell in love with, and married Pauline Durbin, sister of Warren Perry Durbin, who was eighteen at the time. This would start an adventure the likes of which dime novels would write about. They traveled west of Independence and settled in Indian hunting territory on the extreme frontier. This move meant that to survive they would need to become proficient at protecting themselves from hostile Indians. Over the next thirteen years the couple became the parents of five sons and two daughters. During this time Ben needed to support his family so he farmed his land, hunted, cleared land for others and chopped wood. To say it was a hard and dangerous life would be slightly understating that fact. They had to contend with the elements and had numerous skirmishes with the natives. During one of the battles, to ward of the Indians, Ben lost partial sight in one eye as it was injured by an arrow from an attacker's bow.

Benjamin Franklin English and his wife Pauline knew how to survive on this wild frontier. They knew it

required a lot of grit and gristle, talent and wit and a lack of paralyzing fear to survive as pioneers as the English family was doing. They knew nothing can go to waste. The understanding was; the only part of a hog that wasn't used was the squeal.

In 1845 the family picked up stakes and headed for the Oregon Territory. It would be a hard and dangerous trip but so too had been surviving on the frontier, so fearing the trip was not an issue.

After several months of contending with Indians and the elements, the family finally reached their destination and settled near the Luckiamute river in Polk county, western Oregon.

There were no new experiences here for the intrepid English family as they dealt with bad weather, food shortages and hostile Indians while they secured their homestead.

They not only secured their homestead, the family stayed put for seventeen years, growing the family by four more since leaving Missouri.

After surviving the hostile frontier in Missouri, an arduous journey to Oregon, illness, disease, giving birth on the trail and all the perils associated with, they

had all survived, until little Sarah lost her life in 1861. She was the first of the English clan to parish.

Sarah Ann English, born in 1838 in Missouri had married James John Williams in 1852 in Oregon, she was fourteen. They had five children during their marriage. She died as a young mother on November 13, 1861, in Polk, Oregon, at the age of 23, and was buried in Corvallis, Oregon.

Benjamin Franklin English Jr., born in 1842, was the “white sheep” of the family. In 1857, at the ripe old-age of fifteen and after surviving a somewhat harrowing trip, Junior headed back east to Missouri, undeterred by his memories of his recent trip west and all the dangers involved. He then turned around and led a wagon train of friends and relatives from Missouri to the Rogue River, bringing the entire party safely to its destination.

Later, but still a young man, Ben Jr. acquired the nickname of ‘Doc’ in Oregon because of his ability to calm and care for ailing animals, and, many times he was called upon by neighbors to tend their sick or injured livestock.

A couple years later, after leading the wagon train to Oregon, when ‘Doc’ was seventeen, he became part of a wagon train headed for the British Columbia gold

fields. That wagon train was forced back by hostile Indians; at nineteen, the same year Sarah died, he picked up and moved to B. C. where he spent the rest of his life. 'Doc' had a reputation as a horseman, veterinarian, pack trainer, rancher, gambler, lawman, husband and father. 'Doc' was truly the "white-sheep" of the family. He lived to be 80 years old and died May 6, 1922 in Ashcroft, British Columbia.

The rest of the family moved on to California in 1863.

Lucretia English married William McBee in Benicia in 1866, they moved to Sonoma county where they had a son William Franklin McBee in May of 1867.

After 'Buck' was apprehended in 1895 and was being held in Napa, the District Attorney, Theodore Bell, received a letter from a Mrs. Lou Peterson from Chico. Mrs. Peterson stated that she had a younger brother named "Buck English" that she had not seen for over eighteen years and he would have a scar on his leg where he had been scalded as a child. Turns out, 'Buck' did have a scar on his left leg.

It also turns out, Lucretia English had not only been married to Wm. McBee but also; Orloquil C. Newcomb, Richard Henry Peterson and lastly George Washington Robinson. Her only child, William

McBee, died of pneumonia in 1900. She last appeared in the 1910 census as Lou Robinson living in Chico.

After the trouble in Solano county with the Durbins, B. F. headed for the new county of Lake in California and in June of 1867 Benjamin Sr. was registered to vote in Coyote Valley, Lake county, California. The rest of the family, according to the 1870 census, was still in Green Valley. But then in 1871 Charles Henry was registered to vote in Coyote Valley as well. By the 1880 Census, Benjamin F. and Pauline L. English are residents of Middletown, Lake county, California.

According to the History of Napa and Lake Counties, published in 1881, it states: "*They settled on the road leading from Middletown to Lakeport, near Anderson Springs, where they now reside.*" L. S. Patriquin, one of the owners of Anderson Springs, is too listed as an executor of B. F.'s estate.

Harmon Hamilton (Ham) and Eugene (Gene) headed to Canada to spend time with or near their older brother, Ben Jr.

In September of 1883 Harmon married Sarah F. Murphy in Clark, Washington Territory.

Then on December 26, 1883, B. F. English Sr. died. He was buried in the Middletown Cemetery,

Evergreen section #126 where there is a marker memorializing him.

The English estate was settled by May 1885 and Buck moved his mother to Canada to live with his brother, her son, Ben Jr. Buck stayed in Canada for a few years and worked as a scout for the Canadian Army in the Riel Rebellion of 1885 in which he was seriously wounded. He also worked as a cowboy, a whiskey smuggler, and a gambler. Then upon returning to Lake county he secured a job driving stages for William 'Bill' Spiers.

Pauline Lillian (Durbin) English died in Canada in 1896 and is buried there.

Charley English, who lived in Middletown, was a butcher, helped his brother Buck in a shooting scrape, survived being shot and cut up with a knife, spent time in San Quentin for shooting a Durbin, was found dead floating in the Columbia River. No date or cause of death given.

Father: Benjamin Franklin English died 1883

Mother: Pauline Lillian (Durbin) English died 1896

Children:

David English; b. 1834 - lynched 1862

Paulina; b. 1835 - ?

Daniel Durbin; b. 1836 - killed 1868
Sarah Ann; b. 1838 - dies 1861
Charles Henry; b.1840 - found dead
Benjamin F. Jr.; b. 1842 - died 1922
Warren Perry; b. 1843 - killed 1865
Thisley Jane; b. 1845 - ?
Lucretia "Lucy - Lou" F.; b. 1848 – died after 1910
Harmon Hamilton "Ham"; b. 1850 - ?
Eugene "Gene" B.; b. 1852 - ?
Lawrence Buchanan "Buck"; b. 1855 - died 1915

OTHERS

RICHARD N. BRECKENRIDGE was born in New York in the year 1873. He entered San Quentin May 30, 1895 He was 22 years old, his prisoner number was 16359. He was discharged August 29, 1910.



BRECKENRIDGE, alias Smith.

As depicted in the Napa Register



William “Bill” Spiers Stable Lincoln Ave. Calistoga

WILLIAM “BILL” SPIERS was born in Monterey, Owen county, Kentucky, on August 29, 1853. At 19 Bill moved to California first locating in Napa county where he found employment as a wood cutter. Later he went to Pine Flat, Sonoma county, where he worked at the quicksilver mine and saved \$1,040.

With this stake, he relocated to Calistoga and went into the freight hauling business hauling freight to the Great Western quicksilver mine in Lake county. Then in 1880 he bought the small stage line running from the end of the railway in Calistoga to towns and resorts in Lake county and this enterprise grew into one of the

largest of its kind in California. In the beginning he drove the six-horse coaches, and later, as he prospered, he hired the best drivers available.

Bill married Martha Simpson, a school teacher from Lower Lake, in San Francisco in 1891. They had three children together.

Bill Spiers was only two years older than Buck English, however, he lived much longer. He died of a stroke while driving an automobile in Calistoga April 4, 1931, sixteen years after "Buck" passed, he was 77.

Bill's final resting place is in the St. Helena Cemetery.

At the time of his passing his youngest son Alden Spiers was living in Middletown.

CLEAR LAKE STAGE LINE
U. S. MAIL ROUTE.

Stage leaves Middletown for Lakeport, via Glenbrook and Kelseyville, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 3 P. M.
For Lower Lake, daily, (except Sunday) at 3 P. M. For Calistoga, daily, (except Sunday) at 11 A. M. Stage arrives at Middletown at 3 P. M. from Calistoga every day except Sunday.

GENERAL OFFICE,
LODI STABLES - - CALISTOGA

L. MCLAIN, Agent, Calistoga.
G. A SAGRY, Agent, Middletown.
WILLIAM SPIERS, Proprietor.

MUGSHOTS



“BUCK” ENGLISH 1895
SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON



“BUCK’s” ARMY COLT REVOLVER



RICHARD N. BRECKENRIDGE
SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON

The Public Gratiified.
What is Said of the Successful Trip of the Sheriff's posse.

Comments Upon the Capture of the Sligo Kidnappers.

Warranted to be the most successful of the Sheriff's posse.

The Sheriff's posse, which captured the Sligo kidnapers, has been the subject of much comment. The Sheriff's posse, which captured the Sligo kidnapers, has been the subject of much comment. The Sheriff's posse, which captured the Sligo kidnapers, has been the subject of much comment.



BUCK BRADSHAW.

will know who to seek for his help when he is in trouble. He will know who to seek for his help when he is in trouble. He will know who to seek for his help when he is in trouble.



SHOWN UP BY THE SHERIFF'S POSSE.

A - When the Sheriff's posse was shown the Sligo kidnapers. B - When the Sheriff's posse was shown the Sligo kidnapers.



BRADSHAW, alias Smith.

The Sheriff's posse, which captured the Sligo kidnapers, has been the subject of much comment. The Sheriff's posse, which captured the Sligo kidnapers, has been the subject of much comment.

Lynchings

English, David; for robbery; 1862

TERRITORY OF WASHINGTON, }

COUNTY OF CLARKE. }

88.

I, *Joseph Parker,*

do solemnly swear that I am acquainted with

Harmon H. English,

that he is more than twenty-one years of age, and unmarried; also that I am acquainted with

Sarah F. Murphy,

that she is more than eighteen years of age, and unmarried; .

further swear that said

Harmon H. English

and *Sarah F. Murphy*

are not nearer of kin than second cousins.

Joseph. Parker

Sworn and subscribed to before me,



32 of 40



day of

Sept

A. D. 1862

Marriage - Harmon H. English to Sarah F. Murphy

In the matter of the estate
of
B. F. English dec'd.

State of California }
County of Lake } ss.

L. S. Patquin and J. B. Harbin the
Jurors named in the above bond, being duly
sworn, each for himself, says that he is a
householder & resident within this State & is
worth the said sum of Five hundred dollars
over & above all his just, ^{and} liabilities, exclusive
of property exempt from execution.

Subscribed & sworn to before me } L. S. Patquin
this 15th day of May, A.D. 1888. } J. B. Harbin.

J. L. Reed }
Notary Public for Lake County }

Probate Estate of B. F. English

Says the Middletown Independent: Through the courtesy of John McGreer Jr., we received a copy of the Purcell Register, published in Indian Territory, at which place he was; so we suppose he will cross into the promised land of Oklahoma. . . . The large oak tree that stood in front of Ransdell & McCall's office, and lent its kindly shade to so many for these long years, is a thing of the past. A few days ago it was cut down. Old-timers will remember that this is the tree that Buck English dodged behind when shooting at one of Middletown's respected citizens, years ago.

NEWSPAPER FROM 1889
INCIDENT WITH BUCK HAPPENED MAY OF
1876

ADDENDUM

THE REST OF THE STORY

After publishing the book “ENGLISH” I found more information regarding David, Charley, Eugene, Daniel Buck and Lucretia.

As we previously read in “English” they were an extremely resilient and capable family regarding not just surviving but doing so on the hostile frontier.

A positive trait the English’s had for surviving was a lack of paralyzing fear. They seemed to fear nothing and I think that attitude influenced each one of them when setting their own course into the future.

The English family came from the same area of Missouri that produced the likes of Jesse and Frank James, the Younger brothers, Belle Starr and Polk Wells who were all notorious outlaws. The English boys were cut from the same cloth. The ‘outlaw-way’ would become their way.

After moving from Missouri to the Oregon Territory it wasn’t long, we previously learned, until the oldest son, David, took up the ‘outlaw’ way.

We know this led to his lynching. But have now learned more about the incident and those involved

Lewiston was a boomtown as a result of the discovery of gold and it attracted a lot of unsavory characters. And like many Western towns, guns helped shape the history of Lewiston, which has the distinction of having the first vigilante association in what later became Idaho.

Around 250 residents belonged to the Lewiston Protective Association at one time or another. The group was started in 1862 because outlaws were robbing miners coming from the gold fields.

It was written that Lewiston policemen often had to defend themselves from the “association” because just as the later Montana vigilante group did, the association took justice into its own hands.

David was a member of a notorious trio made up of him, William Peoples and Nelson Scott who together practiced their “outlaw” trade. The trio, robbed a packer of 100 ounces of gold-dust between Lewiston and Florence. They were tracked down and arrested at Walla Walla and returned to Lewiston.

The “association” members, bent on retribution, overpowered the guards at the city jail and removed the three accused men. The three were found dead the next day in a barn, they had been lynched. This happened on November 15th, 1862. David was 28, the second English to die. Now there were twelve.

By spring of 1863, association leaders claimed to have rid Lewiston of 200 thieves and gamblers. That same year on March 4th, the territory of Idaho was officially organized by Act of Congress, and signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln.

(Lynching by a mob normally means the subject will die from suffocation, while legal hanging hopes to cause death by breaking the subject's neck.)

The next to lose his life would be Daniel and we remember it was in a place called Spanish Town in Napa. Here's the rest of the story.

The area the men were frequenting was known as Spanish Town. It was located in the northeast portion of downtown Napa, between Napa Creek, West Street, Stuart Street (now Clinton Street), and Edmondson Street (now Yajome Street). It had a reputation for being a rough neighborhood. It's notoriety included charges of being home to prostitutes and murderers.

The Sonoma Democrat reported on March 28th, 1868 regarding the killing of Daniel that: *"From the evidence it appears that "Bulger" Raines, a notorious character, commenced the disturbances which led to the unhappy result, if, indeed, he did not visit the house for the express purpose of involving his companions in difficulty."*

The Coroner's jury found the shooting of Daniel was done by Dolores Coronado, proprietor of the dance hall. But an

examination before Justice Hannevell resulted in the discharge of all three of the Mexicans arrested.

Seems Dolores Coronado murdered without ever being punished. The Marysville Daily reported on February 19th, 1863 the following story. *“MURDER IN NAPA. —The Solano Press of the 16th has the following : On Sunday night Feb. 1st, a native Californian named Blas Amarenas, was shot at the rancheria near the residence of Don Cajetano Juarez, about one mile from Napa. An inquest was called, and after an examination of all the testimony presented, the jury returned a verdict that deceased came to his death by a pistol ball fired by one Dolores Coronado. A warrant was issued immediately, but Coronado has not been arrested.”*

Charles went home to Green Valley. By this time Lucretia “Lucy or Lou” English had married. She married William McBee on September 13th, 1866 in Benicia, California.

But if Charles were to have read the Weekly Butte Record of April 25th, 1868 he might have read this story:

“The Mexicans. Dolores and Guadalupe Coronado, says the Napa Register, the two brothers concerned in the killing of Daniel English and the wounding of Charles English, in a recent affray in Spanish Town, have at last—to use a homely phrase—“died with their boots on.” They left Napa a couple of weeks since for the San Joaquin river, and had reached Merced county, where the event occurred which resulted in their deaths. The facts, as stated by a

brother now here, are these; The two men had stopped at a tavern kept by one Joe Griffith, near the town of Snelling. to get some drinks, and in settling for the same a difficulty arose as to the amount to be paid. This point having been decided apparently satisfactorily, the Mexicans got on their horses to leave, when Griffith followed them out and endeavored to raise a quarrel with Dolores. The latter said he desire no difficulty with him, and as a proof of his peaceful inclinations offered to give up his pistol. While in the act of drawing the weapon from his waist, Griffith fired at him, the shot taking effect and killing him instantly. As soon as he had fallen from his horse his brother dismounted and was about to take the pistol from his body, when Griffith shot him dead also. Whether there were any witnesses to what , occurred, aside from the parties referred, we know not, and of course the above statement must be taken for what it is worth. Dolores Coronado had killed one man. we are told, previous to the affray, resulting in the death of Darnel English, whom he undoubtedly shot. Although a cool, courageous man, he has not been regarded as a quarrelsome or evil-disposed person, generally acting on the defensive, but brooking insult from no one. Many persons are of the opinion that he was followed up by the friends of English with revengeful intent, and that his death may be attributed to that cause.”

Under then current conditions it seems doubtful that Griffith was avenging Daniel's death, seems like Coronado could have easily made many enemies and maybe it was pay-back time.

Except for the “white sheep” Ben Jr., the English boys were all “outlaws”

Early on in Middletown, we know Charley was a butcher but as we also read, he was right there to help his brother Buck during the shootout in 1875. After that, it wasn't too long before he, Charley, was on the outlaw trail.

Those Englishes who were in the Middletown area in the 1870s, that we know of, were mom and dad English, Charlie, Lucretia (Newcomb), Eugene and Buck. B. F. English had homesteaded 120 acres above Anderson Springs in the Putah Creek drainage near present day Socrates Mine road. That is where the English home was located.

Early March 1875 Lucretia's husband O. J. Newcomb got into an scuffle with Ben Marshall in Middletown. During the quarrel, Marshall drew a four-shooter Deringer and shot Newcomb, the ball penetrating the left cheek, near the mouth, and coming out the back of the neck. It was ugly but not fatal.

The Deringer was laying on the bar and several others in the saloon had picked up Marshall's Deringer and it failed to fire several times. Newcomb's brother-in-law, Eugene English, grabbed the Deringer and in a playful manner aimed it at a local man known as 'Uncle Mike Ready' saying something playful he then snapped the trigger. The

Deringer fired killing Ready instantly. English was not charged but folks were outraged.

By 1878 Charley was on the run with his brother Eugene.

Charley and Eugene along with the two local Donelson boys, went on a marauding trip through northern California and Oregon and were wanted men.

Charley had robbed a man in Lake county, stole several horses in Shasta county and had folks on his trail

In March of 1878, it was reported that J. W. Rose, City Marshal of Healdsburg, had occasion to go to Mercuryville. After passing Pine Flat, and nearing the Rattlesnake mine, he overtook a man, coming upon him suddenly. The stranger whirled around and covered Rose with a Henry rifle. Rose finally rode nearer, inquiring of him if he knew where a Mr. Truitt lived. The man replied that he did not. Rose reported the stranger was sandy complexioned, wore a heavy yellow blanket overcoat, had the appearance of a desperate character and had scars on each cheek It was reported that Charley English has similar marks.

The Weekly Calistogian reported on July 17th, 1878 the following:

“Charley and Eugene English with the two Donelson boys were camped near Shasta, where they committed their last highway robbery on some Chinaman. The constable from

Redding went to the camp to try and find some clue on which to make an arrest. As he left camp he took up one of their rifles, when he was immediately covered by a shotgun and rifle and asked to "drop-it". He did so and left. He soon returned with a posse but the birds had flown. They went on to the banks of the Klamath where they camped. The English boys, becoming tired of the Donelsons, here stole their horses and left, Eugene going one way and Charley another. The Donelsons, finding themselves deserted, and their horses gone, telegraphed to Sheriff Hull to come and arrest them, which he did, and then taking Charley's trail followed it to Portland Oregon where he caged his man. Charley English and the Donelsons boys are now in jail at Shasta. A horse belonging to constable McCall, of Middletown, and a saddle of W. C. Greenfield's were found with the prisoners. So far Eugene English has not been heard from. Charley now stands with three charges against him - highway robbery, horse stealing and the robbery of Mr. Pyle in this county."

On August 28th, 1878 the Sonoma Democrat reported:
"Charley English of Lake county has been sentenced to serve five years In the State Prison for taking part in a stage robbery near Shasta."

In 1880 both Lawrence "Buck" and Charley English were in San Quentin together. Another inmate named Peter Gibson, a Scotsman, murdered an inmate named Austin N. Smith. Smith and Gibson had had a disagreement and Smith threatened on more than one occasion to kill that blankety-blank Scotsman. Both Buck and Charley had to

testify at trial as Smith had on more than one occasion tried to borrow a knife from Charley to murder Gibson and Buck was a witness to this. Charley would not loan the knife but they warned Gibson that Smith meant to do him harm, so the Scotsman struck first.

Gibson was transferred to Folsom State Prison where he was killed trying to escape in November 1880.

Eugene English escaped to Canada and moved in with his brother. B. F. junior. He was counted in the Canadian census of 1881 at William's Lake & Canoe Creek, Cariboo, British Columbia, Canada.

CREDITS

PRINT MEDIA

- Pomo Bulletin
- Napa Register
- Los Angeles Herald
- Morning Union
- Sacramento Union
- Sacramento Daily Union
- Sonoma Democrat
- British Columbia Historical News
- History of Napa and Lake Counties 1881

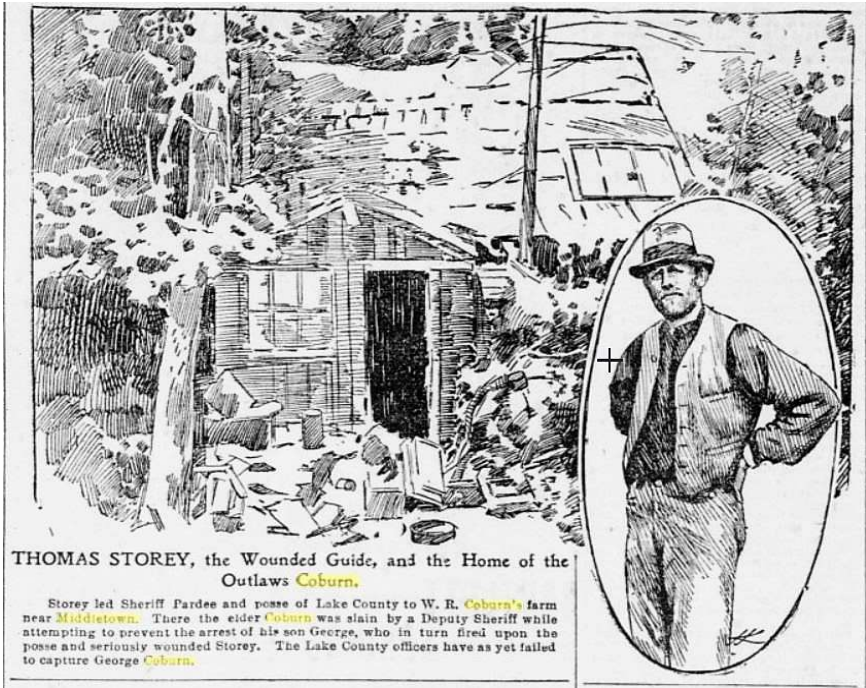
ON-LINE

- Ancestry.com
- Find-a-grave.com
- California Digital Newspapers.com

DISTRICT/AGENCY

- Middletown Cemetery District

BONUS: THE STORY OF GEORGE COBURN



The San Francisco Call

Heading: *THOMAS STOREY, the Wounded Guide and the Home of the Outlaws Coburn.* (Storey's name was James not Thomas)

Storey led Sheriff Pardee and posse of Lake County, to W. R. Coburn's farm near Middletown. There the elder Coburn was slain by a Deputy Sheriff while attempting to prevent the arrest of his son George, who in turn fired upon the posse and seriously wounded Storey. The Lake County officers have as yet failed to capture George Coburn.

INTRODUCTION

The story of George Coburn was first told by Mrs. Helen Rocca Goss in the Quarterly for the Historical Society of Southern California in March, 1956. It was titled: "George Coburn Must Be Back".

MIDDLETOWN, founded in 1871, had twenty years of development behind it when this particular story evolved in the middle 1890s. And anybody who knows anything about Middletown knows the town fully represented what the west was like at that time. Lawlessness was ever present somewhere within the vicinity, from shootouts on main street, to stage coach robberies, to rustling cattle, to stealing horses, to outright murder. Posses were formed frequently. There were even rumors of an actual lynching.

The story of the lynching goes like this; three miners in a saloon were quarreling and the other patrons told them to take it outside. They did not. The next day they were found swaying in the wind hanging from an oak tree.

Juanita (Skee) Hamann, an early Middletown resident, wrote: *"In the early mining days there were so many hold ups, lynchings, killings - - an arm found here, a headless body in an abandoned mine tunnel there - -*

that people used to say; Middletown had a man for breakfast every morning.”

###

THE ROAD TO LAKEPORT goes due West in a relatively straight line for about a mile, after leaving Middletown, until it hits the foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains. Then it makes a hard right going north for a few hundred feet then turns northwest then west again staying along the northern edge of the foothills and south edge of the Loconoma Valley floor. It passes by the Coburn place, then the McKinley's and finally Anderson Springs where the real accent to the pass over the mountains begins.

Before turning north, back where the Lakeport road makes the first hard right, there was also a road that went left that went to the Maker's place. Therefore, this corner was commonly called; "Maker's Corner". (The road that went to the Makers is today known as Dry Creek Cutoff.)

When leaving Middletown and heading to Lakeport, the highest near peak you see ahead of you is Sugar Loaf and that peak and the surrounding area was George Coburn's stomping grounds during this time.

Young George was the son of Warren Rodman Coburn and Christiana (Dickson) Coburn on whose ranch the area afore mentioned was on. George was the eldest of

three children, he was born in 1865. Following him was a brother Edward born in 1866 and last a sister Luella born in 1874.

W. R. arrived in California from Fairlee, Orange County, Vermont in the late 1840s and was living in Yuba, California in 1850. W. R. married Christiana December 10, 1862 in Sonoma county.

After marrying Christina they made their way to Lake county in the 1860s settling west of what would become Middletown. He registered to vote in Lake county August 1, 1866 and is listed in Middletown in 1872.

In the early morning of June 25th, 1897, a posse led by Lake county Sheriff G. W. Pardee encountered W. R. Coburn near Maker's Corner, the latter was armed with a rifle. Shortly after the meeting a member of the posse shot and killed Coburn under suspicious circumstances. Coburn asked: "Why did you shoot me, I didn't do anything wrong?"

But it wasn't a coincidence that the parties involved happened to meet where and as they did. The Posse had been searching for the younger Coburn, George, as he was a wanted man, a fugitive from the law and he, George, had just shot and seriously wounded a member of this same posse.

George Coburn's deeds were so infamous in the area that he had even earned major recognition and that was, whenever anyone was missing something, they would utter: "George Coburn Must Be Back!".

THE GEORGE COBURN STORY

George was pretty much a loner and was probably not held in very high esteem by the citizens of Middletown and the surrounding area, but, his story is included right alongside all of those other bad guys who walked the streets of Middletown. Like twice murderer, Tom Dye, or the Englishes, or the miners who murdered the people at the Camper's Retreat. You can't review Middletown's wild west past and not include the story of George Coburn.

George was an odd fellow in more ways than one. He was a member of the I.O.O.F., or the International Order of the Odd Fellows but he was also a kleptomaniac. He could not resist the urge to steal, period. What he stole did not have to be of great value, it could be a broom, a school book, a buggy whip, a hat or women's clothing. It was the sense of pleasure he felt after the theft that made him do what he did. He stashed his bounty throughout the area west of Middletown.

All of these losses did not go un-noticed, un-reported or un-talked about. Everyone in the area knew that this huge rash of missing items was not an accident and George Coburn was under everyone's suspicion, because as I said, he was an odd fellow.

Some of the locals even suspected that at night when George was out searching for something he could steal he dressed as a woman, as several locals reported seeing a strange woman by herself traveling the roads late at night and who if approached just disappeared, much like George himself would do if approached. Some said this person even wailed as if in distress.

Folks asked Annie Habishaw if this woman could be her, as so much tragedy had befallen her family, but she said it was not.

In early November of 1895, a hunter discovered a large cache of miscellaneous items near the Coburn and McKinley property lines which he eventually reported to law enforcement. George, already suspect, was arrested by Constable J. L. Read November 5th, while standing on Calistoga street in Middletown after leaving an Odd Fellows meeting. He was transported to the county jail in Lakeport.

Over the next couple days it took more than one wagon to haul into town all of George's loot, much of it no longer viable due to moisture, mildew and rot, plus critter and insect infestation.

Before the search was over, several caches were discovered in hollowed out trees and various hillside caves that were all camouflaged.

Obviously, George had no intention of selling any of his loot, he just possessed it. He wasn't only a kleptomaniac he was a hoarder too.

In "The People vs. G. W. Coburn." There were five separate cases, three were listed as burglary with bond fixed at \$500; "grand larceny for stealing a bicycle," trial was set for December 18th and bond fixed at \$500; and in the third case, he was accused of "grand larceny for stealing a side saddle and a sewing machine," The Middletown Independent reported on March 7, 1896 that Coburn had been sentenced to three years imprisonment at Folsom Prison for "the Hughes burglary," and that the district attorney and the counsel for the defense had agreed that sentence in the four other cases in which he had pleaded guilty should not be pronounced by the court until after his appeal in that first case had been decided by the California Supreme Court. Coburn was to remain in jail pending the results of his appeal.

MORNING UNION NOVEMBER 6, 1895

HAS BEEN STEALING FOR TWELVE YEARS.
CALISTOGA (Cal.), "November 5. One of the most remarkable cases of theft ever known in this section came to light yesterday, when George Coburn of Middletown was arrested. He has been stealing articles of all descriptions for several years and it was not until yesterday that he was found out. Coburn is a

single man, aged about thirty years, and lives with his parents, about two miles from Middletown. On his father's ranch was found fully' twenty wagon loads of all kinds of articles that had been stolen from time to time and hid in brush and buried. When arrested he confessed to the charge and stated that he had been carrying the stealing on for twelve years. Yesterday he stole a bicycle and it was through this that he was captured. It is claimed by friends that Coburn is insane."

SACRAMENTO DAILY NOVEMBER 6, 1895

A LAKE COUNTY MYSTERY.

How a Youth Stole for Several Years Before Detected. [Middletown Independent.] *"For a number of years past the people of this town and vicinity, covering a circle of four or five miles, have frequently complained of being robbed of various articles by some midnight prowler or professional thief. Many of the people who were losers had their suspicions, but were never able to trace their lost property. Within the past four or five days a young man, while out hunting, accidentally came upon a hut or cache, three miles northwest of town, and about forty yards from Putah Creek, and near the dividing line between Coburn and McKinley. This hut is concealed by brush, and is a small affair, about four feet in height, five feet wide and eight or nine feet long, In order to reach the hut it is necessary to pass up a deep gulch or creek some forty feet to a large rock, which has to be climbed over, and where a*

sharp turn to the right is made in order to reach a ridge which has to be followed about seventy feet to where the hut is located. The young man who made this discovery gave the information to others, who examined and watched the hut. They were rewarded by seeing G. W. Coburn enter the hut and shortly afterwards leave it. This little building was filled with every imaginable thing—tools, clothing, clocks, blankets, lamps, provisions and articles too numerous to mention. A number of these articles have been identified, and the mysterious disappearance of many of them is now accounted for. It would seem that this hut has been used for a number of years as a place of deposit for many things that have been stolen in the past years. The hut itself has the appearance of being five to eight years old. Between this hut and the gulch are the remains of a former hut, which was no doubt taken down at some time and erected in a safer place—the site is of the present one. No better locality could have been selected as a place of concealment for stolen goods than this out-of-the-way place in a wild and rugged section, where the foot or man seldom treads. The parties who had been watching the hut, and after seeing G. W. Coburn enter and leave it, came to town and reported the facts to Constable J. L. Read, who placed Coburn under arrest on Thursday evening when he was about leaving I.O.O.F. hall where he was attending a meeting. The Constable and a number of citizens went out to the hut on Friday and brought in a

two-horse wagon load of plunder, which is now stored in a building on Calistoga Street, where crowds gather to view this remarkable collection, which surpasses the famous "Old Curiosity Shop,"

While George was being held in the Lake county jail in Lakeport his father, W. R., visited him several times and became suspect later on.

SAN FRANCISCO CALL MARCH 14, 1896

JAIL-BREAK AT LAKEPORT

George Coburn, a Kleptomaniac, Cuts Through the Floor of His Ceil. Had Been Convicted of Burglary and Sentenced to a Term in Folsom. LAKEPORT, Cal March 13.— *“George W. Coburn, who has been confined in the County Jail at this place for four months, escaped Wednesday night by cutting through the floor and then through a 20 inch brick wall. His flight was not discovered until yesterday morning, and the officers of San Francisco and intermediate points were notified at once. It is supposed that he will make for San Francisco and endeavor to obtain passage to Ukiah. His father, W. R. Coburn, spent considerable time with him in his cell and last Monday went to San Francisco. He is suspected of having aided his son in arranging the escape and officers were instructed to shadow him.*

Young Coburn is a kleptomaniac of the worst type. He has been stealing from his neighbors for ten or twelve years and although many of his thefts were committed in open day he was only recently apprehended. At his trial a wagon-load of articles which he had taken was exhibited in court. The plunder consisted of old clothing, boots, shoes, books, canned fruit, pepper sauce, bottles of ink, crowbars, axes, lamps, stoves and innumerable other articles. Some of these were utterly useless to him and could not be disposed of. He never sold any of his stolen goods, but just hid them in caches in the brush. Coburn was convicted of burglary in the second degree and sentenced to three years in the penitentiary. He was to have been taken to Folsom several days ago, but the Judge granted a stay of proceedings to give his attorney time to prepare a bill of exceptions. Coburn is about 30 years of age, has a sandy complexion, light hair, blue or gray eyes, and is about five feet six inches tall. He has a cunning, foxy appearance, and at the same time a cringing, apologetic air, and never looks one in the eye.”

George was on the run!

George was indeed an odd fellow, but that does not mean he was a dummy, far from it, as those pursuing him would learn. George had been arrested during November 1895, tried and sentenced, and he escaped March 1896 and the chase began.

This man obviously knew how to successfully survive in the wilds without other human contact as he had been living a reclusive, hermit type of existence for some time.

George's younger brother Edward Carlos Coburn was still living at home in 1892 but moved to Penryn, Placer county, California shortly thereafter. He was living in Penryn at the time of his father's murder as the Calistogian mentioned him passing through their city on his way to his father's funeral in 1897. He married a woman named Isabella sometime after 1900 and they had a daughter Myrna, together August 13, 1902.

This is significant as there were those who assumed George had fled to his brother's home in Placer county.

In the spring of 1897, roughly a year after George escaped from the Lake county jail, items began missing in the Middletown area again. Many suspected that George was hiding at the Coburn ranch and several times he was nearly captured but always managed to escape. According to the Middletown Independent, early in the morning of June 25th an employee of the Coburn's, James Storey, agreed to lead a posse to George's hiding place. The posse

consisted of Sheriff G. W. Pardee, Constable Strong of Middletown, J. M. Epperson, E. L. Collins, David Lundquist, and D. Poston, who lived near the Coburns. They first went to a cave on the Coburn property about a mile from the house where George normally slept but he was not there. He was located a short time later asleep under a fallen fir tree, the posse ordered him to surrender but George was not having any of that, quick as a flash he grabbed his gun and fired two shots striking Storey wounding him seriously. Despite the posse's return fire Coburn escaped into the wilds screaming like a wild animal.

Strong and Poston took Storey to Poston's place, placed him in a buggy and headed for Middletown where he could receive medical care. The remaining four searched a little longer but then gave up and headed for Middletown.

W. R. Coburn having heard the shooting, got out of bed and went to investigate. He was near Maker's corner when he heard and saw the posse coming from the northwest.

The Sherriff and his posse ordered W. R. to drop his weapon but before Coburn did anything, one way or another, Collins shot and killed him. This provoked some anger in the community as there existed a current dispute between W. R. and Collins.

SAN FRANCISCO CALL July 4, 1897

COBURN SEEN NEAR YOLO

Lake County Officer on the Trail of the Fugitive. WOODLAND, Cal. July 3. — *“Sheriff Pardee and Deputy Poulson of Lake County, together with several Yolo County officials, are hot on the trail of a man answering the description of Outlaw George Coburn. He was seen at Cacheville last evening and is now thought to be somewhere along Cache Creek. The officers have traced Coburn down Cache Creek to Yolo, Where the railroad agent informed them that the supposed Coburn had applied to him during the afternoon for a blank receipt. -This was the last seen of him and it is believed that he was then headed for Elkhorn, hoping to cross the river at that point.”*

SAN FRANCISCO CALL July 7, 1897

YOLO'S MAN-HUNT ABANDONED.

WOODLAND, Cal., July 6.— *“The chase after George Coburn, the Lake County desperado, who was traced to Cacheville last week, has been abandoned by the officers, and Sheriff Pardee and Deputy Paulson returned to Lake County on Sunday morning. The Sheriff is convinced that Coburn was met at Cacheville on the day he was seen there by his brother, who resides at Penryn, Sacramento County; that the two men made their way over to Sacramento and that the fugitive is now many miles away.”*

SAN FRANCISCO CALL November 13, 1897

OUTLAW COBURN GIVEN A WOUND

Shot by a Deputy Sheriff in the Mountains Near Middletown. Escapes Limping Into the Brush and Eludes Posses of Searchers. Special Dispatch to The Call. LAKEPORT, Nov. 12.— *“George Coburn, the outlaw, who has been making his rendezvous in the mountain wilderness near Middletown since his escape from jail, was seen this week at the home of his mother. One of the Sheriff’s deputies fired at him with a shotgun at a distance of about 100 feet and hit him and Coburn ran limping into the brush. Coburn is such a desperate character that no chances are taken with him and the deputy was afraid to follow him where the outlaw had all the advantage. The alarm was given and soon a posse was searching the brush, but the country is of such a nature that the chances are only about one in a thousand that he can be taken alive and then only by strategy. Since Coburn’s father was killed by the Sheriff’s posse last summer Mrs. Coburn and daughter have conducted the mountain ranch alone. Recently they have decided to sell and move to Marin County and the officers, suspecting that young Coburn would visit them, kept the house under constant surveillance, with the result that he was seen and wounded by the deputy. Mrs. Coburn and daughter were arrested on a charge of aiding and abetting a criminal and taken to Middletown for trial.*

District. Attorney Sayre went down from here, to represent the people. They were found guilty and placed under \$600. bail each.”

The search for George Coburn continued that month of November without anyone seeing him again. The posse, baffled by all that had happened, determined Coburn must have worn some kind of armor shield as many crack shots fired at him at close range never getting their man.

After W. R.’s death and the continuing drama caused by George, Christiana determined she must sell the ranch, which she did.

By 1900 Christiana and Luella were living in Penryn with Edward. They lived there for at least 10 years eventually moving south to Hemet, Riverside county, California where Luella took up farming.

What happened to George is a mystery. George was never reported as being seen after his mother sold the ranch. However, folks still blamed George when something came up missing.

The old Coburn ranch house burned down in 1912, its occupants barely escaping with their lives. The man of the house, H. E. Barnes, suffered serious burns and lost all of the hair on his head. The cause of the fire

was undetermined, however, it was speculated it may have been started by mice and stick matches.

The Middletown Independent reported: *“If the old house held any secrets of the doings or ingenious work of young George Coburn they are forever erased.”*

I wonder where George Coburn was that particular night? Possibly playing with matches?

EPILOGUE

Warren Rodman Coburn was born about 1826 in Fairlee, Orange County, Vermont. He died June 25, 1897 at Maker's Corner, Middletown, Lake county, California. He is buried in the Mount Tamalpais Cemetery, San Rafael, Marin county, California.

Christiana (Dickson) Coburn was born September 10, 1832 in Ryegate, Caledonia County Vermont. She died August 1915 in Hemet, Riverside County, California. She is buried with her husband in the Mount Tamalpais Cemetery, San Rafael, Marin county, California.

Luella Jenette Coburn was born in 1874, she died August 19, 1936 in San Bernardino, California and is buried in San Jacinto Valley Cemetery San Jacinto, Riverside County, California. She never married.

Edward Carlos Coburn was born October 26, 1866, he died February 27, 1942 in Riverside county and is buried in San Jacinto Valley Cemetery San Jacinto, Riverside County, California. His wife, Isabella, was born in 1865 and died July 26, 1923 in Los Angeles, California. Their daughter, Myrna M., born August 13, 1902 died march of 1991 in San Diego, California.

A man named George W. Coburn, born about 1865,
died in Lake county, California November 13, 1922.
“George Coburn Must Be Back”

CREDITS

INDIVIDUAL SOURCES

- Mrs. Delores “Dee” (Spooner) Groves
- Mrs. Helen Rocca Goss
- Mr. Earle W. Wrieden
- Mrs. Juanita “Skee” Hamann

PRINT MEDIA

- Morning Union
- Sacramento Daily
- San Francisco Call
- Middletown Independent
- The Calistogian

INTERNET

- Ancestry.com
- Wikipedia
- California Digital Newspapers.com