

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

Jack Campbell Fatally Shot In Randolph

September 15, 1882

By Virginia Lutes, *Sierran* co-editor from Randolph/Sierraville

John Campbell, who was widely known as Jack Campbell throughout Sierra County, had recently sold his interest in Campbell Sulfur Hot Springs and had moved to a house in Randolph with his wife Maggie, two nieces and two nephews.



Jack Campbell

Campbell was the Republican candidate for Sheriff of Sierra County. He expected he would be elected and would move to Downieville. This upcoming election had been hard fought, the Republican Party was fracturing, and new “reform” Republicans were bucking the old guard led by former state senator, H.K. Turner, Dr. Alembly Jump, and Dan Cole, who voiced their position in *The Mountain Messenger*. The reform Republicans had two new voices, *The Sierra Tribune*, published in Forest City, and *The Sierra Valley Leader*, in Sierraville. It is unclear why Jack Campbell fell out of favor with the old guard, but he had. The Turner group backed another candidate, Frances Hamilton Campbell from Forest City, in the primary; while the Democrats backed Mr. Mead who had previously run

for sheriff but was defeated. This election had become quite ugly. The “old guard” slung so much mud Jack Campbell’s way that heated disputes were heard daily throughout the county. The politics had become so strained that the old guard Republicans now backed Mr. Mead, the democrat candidate. (The reader may wish to review a prior *Sierran* article that concerns this by Bill Copren, written in the summer 2011 issue concerning politics in Sierra County). So, when Jack Campbell was fatally shot, rumors quickly spread that this was a political assassination.

Many newspapers of the area covered the shooting. This excerpt is from the *Sierra Tribune*, a Sierra County paper backing the “reform Republicans”, September 21, 1882, just days after the shooting. “ASSASSINATED! John Campbell, Republican Candidate for Sheriff Shot Dead. A dastardly deed-great excitement created two hundred armed men scour the country – A Noble Man’s Life – “Jack Campbell Shot Dead!” That sentence, as it flashed over the wires Friday night, caused men to stand aghast – they could not at first believe that our Jack Campbell, the man beloved by the people, could have been cruelly murdered. Who could have committed the deed – what could be the object? Thus would the excited crowds reason with themselves – they would not believe the fatal news. But when the report was corroborated by later dispatches, hardy men, who had not known what it was to shed a tear since their childhood, sobbed as a child would over the death of its parent. Although anxious friends waited around the telegraph office until late at night, it was impossible to procure any definite particulars of the fearful tragedy until Saturday morning, when a reporter of the *Tribune* learned the main facts of the killing, which are about as follows... Jack Campbell was sitting in front of the hotel in Randolph when his niece was heard calling him to dinner from the door of his house, not too far distant. Jack got up and started for his home apparently, and when about the middle of the street, J.J. Stubbs was seen to approach him. A few words were

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— THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY —



The Sierra County Historical Society is an organization of people interested in preserving and promoting an appreciation of Sierra County's rich history. The Society operates a museum at the Kentucky Mine in Sierra City, holds an annual meeting, publishes a newsletter and conducts historical research. Members are sent notices of Society activities, receive THE SIERRAN, and are admitted free of charge to the museum and stamp mill tour. If you would like to become involved in these activities or would just like to give your support, please join us!

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Become a Member!

Membership in the Sierra County Historical Society is open to any interested person, business or organization. Members need not be residents of Sierra County. Dues are due and payable each January for the calendar year.

Membership categories are as follows:

- INDIVIDUAL \$20.00
- FAMILY & INSTITUTION..... \$25.00
- BUSINESS & SUPPORTING..... \$35.00
- SUSTAINING..... \$50.00
- LIFE (per person/couple) \$300.00

In addition, Museum Renovation Project donations are gratefully accepted.

Please send dues and donations to:
S.C.H.S.

c/o Don Yegge, Membership Chair
PO Box 336, Loyalton, CA 96118

Membership Corner

We currently have 278 members including 34 lifetime members with our latest being Mary and Richard Nourse! Membership renewals will be mailed shortly and we hope you will continue your support by renewing. The new PastPerfect software will enable us to track volunteer skills and hours donated so when you receive your renewal, please list your skills if you can help.

Museum Renovation Project

The Kentucky Mine Museum opened in 1977 and, after 37 years, it needs extra maintenance. A renovation plan has been drawn up that includes painting, carpeting, repairs, new equipment and fresh displays. Since Sierra County owns the building, we're counting on its help with some costs but we need your help to fund our share and provide volunteer time. Please consider making an additional donation to fund the renovation.

Don Yegge,
Membership Chair

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spoken in a low tone of voice, when Stubbs was heard to say, "Is that so?" It seems that at this juncture Jack turned and took a step or two as if to saunter leisurely home when Stubbs snapped a pistol, which failed to explode. Jack turned and instantly grabbed Stubbs' pistol hand at the wrist, and evidently tried to throw the hand out of range; but Stubbs turned his hand under in some way by throwing his body toward the ground, and fired the fatal shot. The ball entered Jack just below the breast-bone, ranged upward and passed through the heart. He was carried into the hotel, where he expired instantly without murmuring a word. Stubbs is said to have stood on the porch with the crowd while the wounded man was being carried in. During the excitement, however, everyone rushed into the hotel and left the murderer outside. Upon their return he was gone. The greatest excitement prevailed now. A body of two hundred armed men, wild with a spirit of revenge organized and they scoured the country until Saturday night. Stubbs was arrested Saturday evening in Mr. Dolley's house, and taken to Downieville and lodged in the county jail, arriving there about 5 o'clock Sunday morning. It appears that there had never been any difficulty between the murderer and his victim, and the killing was entirely unprovoked. Campbell was unarmed, not having even a pocket knife on his person. In fact, he was a man who never carried weapons, except in the line of duty. But few men would care to attack him single-handed, unarmed or not, for he was of powerful frame and as active as a mountain cat. There are flying rumors about a conspiracy, and that other arrests will be made. There is also much talk about the man Dolley, who kept Stubbs secreted in his house for thirty odd hours. It is claimed by Dolley's friends; however that he was justified in the cause he pursued from fear of a mob. Of course, it would be out of place to comment on these rumors until all the facts are known... The funeral took place Sunday in Downieville under the auspices of the Masons, of which Order and the Oddfellows the deceased was a member. Although the day was very stormy, the funeral was largely attended, friends being present from all portions of the State.

The *Sacramento Daily Union* of September 16, 1882 gave a less emotional accounting of the shooting. The particulars of the Campbell shooting affair at Randolph, as far as ascertained at the present time, are about as follows: J. B. Campbell received the Republican nomination for Sheriff of Sierra county at the late Convention, after a very hard fight. Since

his nomination he has been making a strong and thorough canvas of the county, but his enemies were busily engaged in working against him, and the feeling has run pretty high. About two days ago a man by the name of Cody, a particular personal friend of Mr. Campbell, and Mr. Stubbs, the man who did the shooting, had some trouble at Sierraville in regard to the political situation, during which Cody drew a pistol on Stubbs, but made no attempt to use it. Today Mr. Campbell came to Randolph, a small town near Sierraville, where Stubbs lives; to see the latter and settle the difficulty he had with Cody. Stubbs was in



The hotel in Randolph where Campbell was sitting before the shooting.

the house owned by G.R. Buxton, eating his dinner. Campbell waited until he came out, and then the two commenced talking in an ordinary tone. After they had been talking for a few minutes, Campbell was heard to say, "You would, would you?" To which Stubbs replied, "Yes; if they want me they can find me any day or any hour." Campbell then turned and walked away from the other, with his hands in his pockets. After he had proceeded about thirty feet Stubbs drew a pistol, ran up behind Campbell, brought the pistol around to the front of his victim and shot him in the pit of the stomach. Several men were standing near who caught Campbell before he fell, and started to carry him to the house. He never spoke a word after the shot was fired and died before they reached the house. Although there were several men near the place, not one of them had presence of mind enough to watch which way the murderer went after the fatal shot was fired, and he escaped, not leaving any trace behind him. The murderer is a young man about 22 years of age, a native of Maine, and he has the reputation of being quiet, sober and industrious. The feeling is very strong against him, and if he is captured the county will not have to go to the expense of a trial, as the people will dispose of the case before it reaches the Courts.

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Other versions of the shooting varied slightly. What was actually said, how the murder actually took place, all seem to vary slightly. What is agreed upon is that it happened, Stubbs shot Campbell, who was unarmed, and in the excitement Stubbs slipped away to hide.

From *The Reno Evening Gazette*, September 22, 1882: "Jack Campbell's Murderer J. J. Stubbs, the murderer of Jack Campbell at Randolph, Sierra Valley, is in jail in Downieville. Had he not been hurried away, he would have fared roughly at the hands of the armed men who were hunting him, among whom were Indians of Sierra Valley. Many incline to the belief that Stubbs is but a hired assassin..."

The Expositor, September 23, 1882 and *The Reno Evening Gazette* dated September 28, 1882, gave credit to Constable Henry Slipner for saving Stubbs from the angry posse. When he found where Stubbs was hiding, he set about to divert those hunting Stubbs from the hiding place. He made arrangements to have a team meet him at a certain point to take Stubbs to Downieville, the county seat. Due to problems with a horse getting loose, the team failed to arrive, so from 7PM until 10PM, the constable and Fred Perry waited in the brush with Stubbs. A cold rain was falling, and the surrounding country was filled with angry men



Depiction of mob vigilante "justice" in the Old West who wanted to hang the shooter. Slipner was stationed by road; Perry and the prisoner were hidden in the brush a short distance away, when a man rode by with a double-barreled shot gun, which the somewhat drunk man aimed at Slipner. Slipner explained who he was, the man started on, but accidentally the gun went off. Now, Slipner and Perry had no choice but to sneak the prisoner Stubbs away from that hiding area. It was a frightening time; the three thought they would

be shot at any time. Constable Slipner and Mr. Perry were able to get to Perry's, where they were able to get a wagon and head to Downieville with the prisoner. They traveled during the night to avoid problems with the angry mob that was hunting for Stubbs.

Carrie Neeley in her book *Behind Every Hero*, (for sale at our museum at the Kentucky Mine) gives an excellent look at the politics leading up to the killing and the aftermath of what went on in the county and thoughts from surrounding areas. During her research, she found a *Mountain Messenger* article dated Sept. 22, 1882. "The crowd wanted to search Dolley's house, but he locked the door and denied the entrance without a search warrant. That evening the Constable came to Dolley's house and was admitted and found the prisoner. Of this he said nothing, fearing the crowd would lynch him if they knew his whereabouts. At 10 o'clock Constable Slipner started for Downieville with Stubbs, arriving at 8 o'clock the next morning where he was lodged in jail. The body of Campbell was brought to Downieville for the funeral Sunday morning, arriving a few hours after the murder..."

Linus and Amelia Dolley, who had the house where Stubbs was captured, located near the store, were ridiculed for a time following Stubbs capture. Eventually it was understood that they had sheltered him until cooler heads could prevail, and he could safely be taken to jail in Downieville.

Those who backed Jack Campbell in politics grieved the loss of a good friend, a man they trusted and respected. Maggie Campbell and the nieces and nephews were inconsolable.

Those who had not backed Jack quietly stayed indoors for the days following the shooting. *The Expositor* of September 20, 1882, printed this, "Saturday's issue of the *Expositor* was omitted on account of much of our matter having to be left out. Several columns had been set up of matters political and otherwise, but owing to the death of Mr. John Campbell it would be out of taste now to publish them. The course this paper has taken in regard to Mr. Campbell appertained to his public life alone, and we are glad to say that nothing of a personal nature ever appeared in its columns. In the heat of a political campaign many things are necessarily said that under different circumstances would sound harsh and unjust. But now that the hand of Death has taken Mr. Campbell from

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this world, we think of him only as a private man and brother, and mourn his loss with a deep and sincere sorrow." *The Expositor* went on to print "A Terrible Tragedy, Jack Campbell Shot Through the Heart in the Streets of Randolph", with flowery and friendly language.

The Sierra County Tribune Thursday, September 21, 1882 printed a column "How Outsiders Feel", taken from a Marysville newspaper, to show the sentiment from outside Sierra County. "Jack Campbell, who seems to have been the unfortunate victim of a political conspiracy, was one of the most genial and kind-hearted men in Sierra County, and his killing will create the greatest feeling of regret and sympathy among good men of both parties. Ever since Mr. Campbell received the nomination for Sheriff a bitter partisan crusade has been carried against him. This personal warfare has been presented until assassination appears to be its legitimate fruits. Those who have contributed to this bloody tragedy must feel the stings of remorse most keenly."

It is not likely we will ever know what truly led to the murder of Jack Campbell, nor will it be clear what words were actually spoken between Jack and his killer on the street in Randolph on September 15, 1882. We are left with the question, was this a political shooting, or was it personal?

Who were these two men, first let us examine what we know of Jack Campbell.

John Campbell was born in Ireland in 1837. He left County Donegal in 1857 for New York. He stayed a short time in New York before continuing on to Sierra County California where he engaged in mining at Morristown and Cox's Bar, then in Downieville. He later went into the saloon business in Downieville.

In 1866 he was married to Maggie Turner, also of Downieville. Jack Campbell was elected Sheriff of Sierra County in 1869, and then re-elected to succeed himself. After his term of office expired, he moved to Sierra Valley in 1874, to reside on the Fenstermaker place near Sierraville, which he had purchased. Along with Jack and Maggie, they had four children who had been orphaned. The Williams children were related to Maggie, and found a lasting home with the Campbells.

The farm that the Campbells had purchased also held what was known as "The Sulfur Springs". Jack

set about building a hotel for the accommodation of visitors. The grand building and property was called "Campbell Hot Springs" for generations after the family left. It is now known as "Sierra Hot Springs".



Campbell Hot Springs, circa early 1900s.

The hot springs was known as "being one of the finest in the State for medicinal qualities". Meanwhile Jack considered himself a farmer, for that was the occupation shown on the 1880 Census. At that time he was age 42, his wife Maggie was 32, niece Maggie Williams, age 20, John Williams, nephew, age 17, Eliza Williams, niece, age 14, and nephew A. Williams, age 11. Also shown in the household were Alex Donovan, miner, age 48, Joseph Perry, farm labor, age 17, Jacob Ingall, farm labor, age 45 and Ah Lem, cook, age 37. A notation in a Reno paper in 1879 had a statement from Campbell that the hay "will be cut in the upper end of the valley before the grasshoppers are old enough to do any harm."

The Campbell's did not stay at the springs for long, for in 1881, they purchased M. Dean's lot in Sierraville, and soon sold the Hot Springs to Mr. Pearce.

Jack was approached by the reform republicans to have his name placed on the ballot for sheriff, Jack agreed. It can only be speculated upon as to whether or not Jack Campbell was aware that his name being placed on the ballot would bring complications for his family and himself.

Just prior to the fatal date, the Tribune, September 7, 1882, defended Campbell, the Republican candidate for Sheriff, from charges of corruption in pocketing over \$1,000 in fees while Sheriff in the late 1860's and early 1870's. (These charges had been raised of another

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sheriff also, but that man was backed by the old guard republicans in another election, and they defended that man. This time, the charges were raised by the old guard republicans against one of their own, just to muddy the waters in the mind of the people.)

The campaign was brutal; Jack did not make it to the election, Mr. Mead became Sheriff. Mrs. J. Campbell died in Sacramento in March of 1886.

Little is known of J.J. Stubbs, the young man who shot and killed Jack Campbell on that fall day in the town of Randolph. He came to Sierra Valley from Wheatland, California, to obtain work. He lived in the Buxton Hotel, and worked at the local Planing Mill. He was liked by his fellow workers and others in the community, but it was known that he had a temper. At the time of the shooting, he was 22 years of age.

J.J. pled "self-defense". He remained in jail in Downieville awaiting his trial. His father traveled from Wheatland to be with him. The parents were well known and respected in their community. The trial was originally set to begin November 8, 1882, but was delayed numerous times. In May, 1883, C.W. Cross was set to conduct the defense of Stubbs. He was on his way to Downieville when he was thrown from his buggy and dislocated his shoulder.

The trial finally took place in July, 1883. The verdict at the conclusion of his eight day trial was "murder in the 2nd degree". On the first ballot the jury voted five manslaughter, three second degree, and four first degree murder. Stubbs was sentenced to not less than ten years in the state penitentiary.

On August 2, 1883, the Tribune reported that Stubbs was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment.

On July 28, 1885, C.W. Cross applied for a pardon for I.J. Stubbs, who killed John Campbell in Sierra County in September, 1882, and who was sentenced to eighteen years imprisonment. Cross contended that Stubbs did not have a fair and impartial trial, that the act was

committed in self-defense, and that, through some mistake, new evidence, forming the basis of a new trial, could not be presented to the court. The case was taken under advisement by the Board of State Prison Directors at Folsom Prison. No further documentation was located to date.

In time, the community of Randolph healed from the murder and citizens eventually returned their firearms to their homes instead of carrying them daily. Rumors and speculation continued for many years as to why Jack Campbell was killed.

The next time you visit Sierraville, travel south on Lincoln Street (Hwy. 89) to the intersection with Willow Street. Stop for a moment and look around. Some of the buildings that were there in 1882 are still occupied – the Dolley Store and the Buxton Hotel. Cody's Saloon is no longer in existence.

This article on the Murder of Jack Campbell came about from an inquiry to our Sierra County Historical Society by a relative of Mr. Campbell, Rick Detwiller, who was hoping to verify a photo found in his family notes. The photo was taken in Virginia City, NV. No photo of Sheriff Campbell is at the Sheriff's Office, where they have attempted to have a likeness of every sheriff who has ever served in Sierra County. Mr. Detwiller's question remains unanswered. It is likely that this is a photo of our Sheriff Campbell, since it was the only photo taken in the west in the collection that Mr. Detwiller has. If any of our readers has a photograph of Jack Campbell, we would appreciate the verification. Mr. Detwiller also provided some background on Campbell, and a newsprint copy of The Sierra County Tribune, Thursday September 21, 1882, which provided much information used herein. Carrie Neeley, author of Behind Every Hero was contacted and able to verify some of her story of Campbell's murder in her book. Peni Morris (Perry family) was contacted and lead to articles in the Reno papers. Bill Copren provided information from the Expositor. James J. Sinnott's works on the History of Sierra County were also consulted.

A New Curator Selected and Intern Scheduled for the 2014 Season at the Kentucky Mine and Museum!

At its October 16 meeting the Sierra County Historical Society board of directors voted unanimously to hire last season's acting curator, Dianne Bruns, as the new curator for the Kentucky Mine and Museum. Dianne was recommended for the position by the appointed nominating committee which conducted an applicant search and interviews Dianne stepped into the acting curator position last season when both the curator and assistant curator were unable to continue in those positions.

The board of directors also approved the appointment of a student attending Truckee Meadows Community college to serve as an intern at the Kentucky



Dianne Bruns and Keith Jewett

Mine and Museum for the summer 2014 season. Keith Jewett, an anthropology major, will be working at the mine and museum three days a week, assisting Dianne with managing the museum, leading tours of the mine and stamp mill and doing accessioning work and recordkeeping.

We are very pleased to have Dianne and Keith ready to make the 2014 season at the Kentucky Mine and Museum a great experience for the thousands of visitors who come each summer to learn about the exciting gold rush era in Sierra County! Dianne and Keith talk about their vision for the Kentucky Mine and Museum and their outlook for the 2014 season in their personal insights below.

Dianne Bruns

"I am so excited to return to the Kentucky Mine as full time curator this summer. I look forward to greeting all of the travelers, summer residents, and vacationers. I really enjoy sharing their family histories, hearing all of their rich stories, and educating them about Sierra County's fascinating history. This year, one of my main priorities will be moving the museum into the digital age. We will be transferring all of our records into a wonderful accessioning program that Cindy Elsemore has discovered, and spent countless hours setting up for the Sierra County Historical Society. In addition to these things I hope to work on instituting a living history day for the area schools, and increasing the number of school tours that we do in general. "

Keith Jewett

"My name is Keith Jewett, I was born and raised in Reno, Nevada. I have spent many summers with my family enjoying the wilderness near the Sierra County area, camping at Independence Lake and staying at my parent's cabin in Graeagle (which is actually nearby Plumas County). It was not until recently that I learned of the Kentucky mine or the museum but on my first visit there I fell in love with the site and the quality of preservation, care and passion that has been put into it. It was while working on my major in Anthropology that I met Instructor Judy Lawrence, who happens to be a member of the Sierra County Historical Society. She presented me with this amazing opportunity that will help me learn a great deal more about the mine, its mill, and its history. I am excited to learn more about the operation of a museum, the responsibilities and planning that happen behind the scenes to ensure everything goes well. I am amazed by the technological feat this small group of miners achieved, tucked away in such a beautiful scenic area and I look forward to sharing this with all of the museum's visitors."

The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

Summer 2014 Concert Series News!



Mumbo Gumbo
at the Kentucky Mine Amphitheater

July 12, 2014
\$25 per person
Concert begins at 7:30

June 28 - Local Bands Night!
Tickets - \$10

August 2 - Bourgeois Gypsies!
Tickets - \$15

Tickets available online now!
Visit SierraCountyHistory.org to purchase tickets through PayPal.