



Copperheads, Secesh Men, and Confederate Guerillas: Pro-Confederate Activities in Santa Cruz County during the Civil War

By Phil Reader

PART I

INTRODUCTION

The secessionist movement and the civil war that followed divided not only the United states, but every county, township, city, and village within it's boundaries. Santa Cruz county was no different. By far, the bulk of the citizenry remained loyal to the Union and Abraham Lincoln enjoyed local voter approval in both the elections of 1860 and 1864. But there were pockets of Confederate sympathizers located throughout the county and they were vocal in their support of the south. Anti-Union feelings were strongest in the Corralitos, Live Oak, Butano, and Pescadero districts.

These men were called "Secesh" men (secessionist) and "Copperheads" or simply "Cops" because during the early part of the war, many of those who supported the Confederacy took a copper penny, clipped the words "United States of America" off of the edge of the coin, leaving only the head etched in the metal and wore them on their lapels as symbol of their beliefs. (Secret organizations, such as the Knights of the Golden Circle and Knights of the Columbian Star, were formed to promote the southern cause.

On May 8, 1861, shortly after Lincoln's ascension to the presidency and the bombardment of Fort Sumter, a large town meeting was held at the Exchange Hall in Santa Cruz. The purpose of this gathering was to assess the community's reaction to the Civil War and take whatever. concerted action that was deemed necessary. What emerged from this meeting was the founding of the patriotic Union Club and a general call to arms. But even at this early point in the crisis there was dissension. A minority report, authored by former County Judge Henry Rice and William D. Farrand - both southerners and leaders of the local Democratic Party was issued condoning secession and attacking Lincoln's policies.

The division in the community merely reflected the nativity of the early pioneers. Those from the southern states, naturally enough, supported the Confederacy while those from the north backed the Union. During the four long years of the Civil War, emotions on both sides ran high.

While the state of California was not directly involved in the fight it did, however, send a large number of citizens into the ranks on each side of the conflict. More than two hundred local men joined the Union forces. Host of these enrolled in Company K, Fifth California Infantry which was mustered at Santa Cruz. This group and subsequently formed groups were sent to Fort Yuma, in the Arizona Territory, to block a possible Confederate attack on California. While a contingent of local native Californios joined Captain Ramon Pico's Spanish Company.

Recruiting soldiers for the Confederate Army took place at a number of southern strongholds in the state, particularly in San Bernardino, Visalia, and San Jose. Men shipped out on steamers leaving San Francisco and landed at Mazatlan, where they then proceeded across Mexico to join the rebel army. The route from southern California was by way of the Mojave Desert to Yuma and then on into Texas and the Confederacy.

Pro-southern activities were of a more clandestine nature and quite limited. The Democratic party was hopelessly splintered and its leadership muted by a hostile local press. However there were several incidents of note involving southern sympathizers which occurred during the war.

THE SAND PACKERS

On the night of April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, a little-known actor who had sympathized with the South. This event sent out shock waves which reached into every corner of the United States. Everyone, regardless of their beliefs, reacted in some way to the news of the killing. It was the type of event that no one forgets. Newspapers announcing the president's death were edged in black, citizens wept openly in the streets, churches were unusually crowded, and flags lowered to half mast.

But there were those who rejoiced at the news of the assassination. Supporters of the defeated Confederacy felt a certain amount of vindication upon the death of their archenemy. A number of them refused to suppress this delight.

George W. Nutter, a native of New York who had arrived at California aboard a whaler during the Spanish days, rode into Branciforte, whooping it up, and firing his pistol into the air. A few days later, Ambrose Calderwood, the county Sheriff and a member of a local militia group called the Butler Guards, went out to Nutter's farm at Blackburn Gulch and placed him under arrest. His crime was "exulting in the assassination of President Lincoln." Accompanied by a staff member from the Provost Marshal's Office, he was placed aboard a steamer and taken up to Alcatraz Island where he was imprisoned for disloyalty. Nutter was put to work packing sand-bags to reinforce the bulwark at the Presidio at San Francisco.

Young John McCoy, the son of a Soquel farmer, was arrested April 20th on the same charge at his father's home on the San Jose Road. He quickly joined George Nutter packing sand at Alcatraz. Lovick Pierce Hall, an Arkansas native, dubbed "Long Primer" Hall by his fellow journalists, had worked as a printer for John McElroy at the Santa Cruz Sentinel for a number of years. He was well known in the area as an advocate of slavery. During the war he moved to Butte county, Merced county, and then Tulare county where he worked for secessionist newspapers. Shortly after the death of Lincoln he was arrested for "exulting" and joined the local sand packers at the prison. His former employers at the Sentinel decried him as "socially and politically a jackass."

There were in all forty-one Californians confined for exulting over the assassination of the president. On June 15, 1865 they were tried in the U.S. District Court at San Francisco before Judge Ogden Hoffman on the legal technicality of using disloyal language towards the General Government. At the hearing they were found guilty, forced to take an oath of allegiance to the United States, and then released.

Of the three sand packers from Santa Cruz, only George Nutter returned home. He continued to live on his farm near Happy Valley until the late 1870s when he moved out of the area. His sojourn to Alcatraz did not dampen his enthusiasm for politics because he continued to be active in the Democratic party until his death, never betraying his enthusiasm for all things southern.

PART II

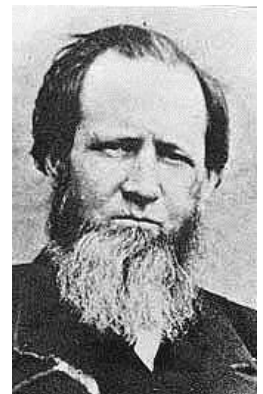
CONFEDERATE GUERRILLAS IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

During the year of 1864, the mountains above the village of Corralitos were a hotbed of pro-secessionist activity. Two separate bands of Confederate guerrillas bivouacked and trained in the rugged Loma Prieta area. Nearby ranchers, in allegiance with their cause, sheltered them from the prying eyes of the local Union militia unit known as the Butler Guards. The almost inaccessible terrain allowed them to move almost unnoticed in and out of their camp.

The first group, led by former Pajaro resident Tom Poole and "Captain" Rufus Ingram one time member of Quantrill's Raiders, plotted a series of raids on the bullion-bearing stage coaches of the mother lode region from this mountain hideout. In June of 1864 this band left Loma Prieta bound for Placerville and a rendezvous with the Pioneer Stage out of Virginia City. Next to occupy the mountain camp was the murderous Mason-Henry Gang, who fled there from the San Joaquin after killing George Robinson at Elkhorn Station for insulting "southern womanhood."

TOM POOLE, CONFEDERATE GUERRILLA

At noon on September 29, 1865, a tall, rough-looking man with a graying beard mounted the steps to a gallows which stood near the jail house in Placerville, California. He ascended the stairs of the scaffold and spoke cordially to the officers who gathered around him and shaking hands with each of them. Presently a black hood was placed over his head and a knotted noose secured tightly around his neck. One of the lawmen gave a signal and the gallows trap door was sprung, leaving the hooded man suspended by the neck. Within moments, Thomas B. Poole, perhaps the best known of California's Confederate Guerrillas, was dead.



Tom Poole

Tom Poole was born in 1820 at Frankfort County, Kentucky to a plantation family who would soon sell their land and slaves, and move to Illinois. Tam learned the Potter's trade and just past the age of twenty he married Mary Caroline (Duff) Davis. In 1850, he was swept away by the gold fever and traveled across the plains to the northern mines of California. After experiencing little or no luck at the diggings in the mother lode, he migrated to the Pajaro Valley in the company of John B. Tyus and filed for a homestead on the Monterey county side of the river. In 1856 he went east and brought his family out to the coast.

Poole was an affable person who made friends easily and ingratiated himself to Henry DeGraw, the Monterey county sheriff, who appointed him deputy in 1857 for a term of two years. DeGraw was an elderly man in ill health, so Poole became de facto sheriff and took on most of the responsibilities of the office.

On March 17, 1856 there had been a particularly foul murder committed on the Carmel Road in the mountains above Monterey. A Scotchman named Frank Hellen, who worked in Carmel but lived at Monterey, started for home about dusk. He had been drinking freely during the day and had paid for the whiskey with gold coins which he kept in his pockets. A group of Indians saw him "flashing" the money around and followed him up the road toward Monterey. They overtook him at a grove of oak trees in the mountains and one of them held him down while the others slashed him with their knives. Finally his throat was cut and the Indians rifled his pockets for the money. When they fled, Hellen, who was still alive managed to crawl into a clump of nearby bushes where he slowly died from loss of blood.

The next morning his body was found and an investigation into the murder was immediately inaugurated. A witness had noticed the Indians follow Hellen out of Carmel valley and was able to identify three of them. Two were soon captured and jailed, while a third escaped into the mountains. One of the two prisoners was able to provide an alibi and was subsequently released. As the lone suspect languished in jail awaiting trial, a group of vigilantes broke into his cell, dragged him out and lynched him along with three other prisoners, who were thought to be involved in another murder.

Several months later, Jose Anastasio, the second Indian implicated in the Hellen killing was captured at his mountain lair. He was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged on February 12, 1858. The customary appeal for clemency was made to Governor John Weller.

Meanwhile, Tom Poole had assumed his roll of acting sheriff of Monterey with the support of the local citizenry. Much to everyone's surprise, the governor issued a reprieve, delaying the execution until March 5th. Poole was on hand to receive the order of judgment. However, Governor Weller had issued the order in the name of Anastasio Jesus instead of Jose Anastasio - a simple clerical error.

There had been almost forty unsolved killings in the Monterey Bay region during the previous three years, so this stay of execution in the case of such a brutal murder was not a popular idea with the people of Monterey - or with Deputy Sheriff Tom Poole. He then hand-carried a copy of the governor's order to Judge Hester of the District Court and asked for a ruling. Hester verified that the reprieve was in the name of Anastasio Jesus and not Jose Anastasio, the man currently awaiting execution. Poole then asked the district attorney and county judge for their interpretation and both agreed with Judge Hester. Taking this as a sign of approval, he proceeded with the hanging, over Sheriff DeGraw's feeble objections. On February 12, 1858, Tom Poole and a party of the leading citizens of Monterey took Anastasio back to the scene of the murder and hanged him on a temporary gallows.

While this willful act may have been popular with the local people, it made the governor absolutely furious. He sent Poole a letter accusing him of outright murder and abuse of the public trust. For his part, Poole responded by laying the execution on the governor's doorstep declaring that it was not his duty "to correct errors in process, nor shield even the governor from the legal results of the blunder." Governor Weller even returned Poole's bombastic letter unopened declining "any correspondence with a man of his character."

Needless to say, Sheriff DeGraw stripped Poole of his position and sent him back to his farm on the banks of the Pajaro River. In 1860 Mary Caroline Poole died, leaving Tom with three children to raise. He removed to

the San Francisco area where he became a partner in a Sansome Street livery stable and remained out of the public eye for the next three years.

When the Civil War broke out, Poole, always a loyal southerner, immediately joined the Knights of the Golden Circle. The knights were a clandestine, pro-slavery organization founded in 1859 for the express purpose of bringing about the military conquest of Mexico, renaming it The Pacific Republic and annexing it to the United States as a slave state. However, following the outbreak of war, its membership - believed to number about 16,000 - undertook a series of new goals. Some sought to raise money and arms to support the Confederacy, others plotted the overthrow of the state government, while another group recruited and armed volunteers for the Confederate Army. These would-be soldiers were funneled into the south via Mexico, Arizona, and New Mexico.

In San Francisco, during the month of July, 1863, Asbury Harpending, a 23 year old Kentucky native, devised a plan to disrupt shipping and commerce on the west coast. He went to Richmond, Virginia and procured letters from the Confederate government authorizing him to operate as a privateer in the service of the Confederacy. Joining Harpending in this endeavor was Alfred Rubery, a wealthy young Englishman and Ridgley Greathouse, a banker and fellow Kentuckian, who was to bankroll the enterprise.

To this end they purchased a ninety ton-schooner named the J.M. CHAPMAN and William Law hired on as a navigator. In her berth at the San Francisco waterfront, she was outfitted with cannon, rifles, pistols and other machineries of war. A crew was recruited from among the local Knights of the Golden Circle. One of the first to volunteer his services in the cause of the Confederacy was Tom Poole. In all, twenty men were to make up the officers and crew of the privateer.

On the night of March 14, 1863, They boarded the CHAPMAN and put out into the bay where they anchored to await a daybreak sailing. The crew posted a lookout and went below deck to sleep. At the first light of dawn they were awakened by the guard shouting the alarm.

Two hundred yards off of the bow lay the U.S. Warship CYANE with her cannon trained on the CHAPMAN. Pulling alongside was a tug manned by marines and policemen, who were armed to the teeth. Harpending, Rubery, and Greathouse were captured and placed under arrest upon the deck, while Tom Poole and the other members of the hapless crew were marched up from their berths in the hold. Their scheme had been betrayed to federal authorities by their navigator William Law.

Poole and the others were taken to Alcatraz Island where they were imprisoned and indicted on charges of treason. Their trials did not commence until October 2nd, when Asbury Harpending, Alfred Rubery, and Ridgley Greathouse were found guilty of giving aid and comfort to an enemy of the United States and sentenced to ten years in prison and a fine of \$10,000. Tom Poole and the rest of the crew were freed after swearing an oath of loyalty to the Union government.

Although Poole had taken the oath of allegiance, he had absolutely no intention of keeping it because at this point in his life, his only loyalty was to the secessionist cause. It was not long before he was involved in another scheme to promote the Confederacy.

Prior to the start of the war there was a large tract of unsurveyed land in the mountainous region above the village of Corralitos in Santa Cruz county. This rugged stretch of terrain, made nearly inaccessible by an abundance of redwoods, was located at the foot of Mount Loma Prieta and ran over the summit towards San

Jose. The woodsmen and farmers in the area were sympathetic to the south and it was here in the winter of 1863/64 that Tom Poole found refuge after the CHAPMAN fiasco.

During this time a number of hardened copperheads drifted into Poole's redwood camp. Among them were the Glendenning brothers, John Bouldware, nineteen-year old A1 Glasby, George and John Baker, and a quarrelsome roughneck named Jim Grant. Host were members of the San Jose chapter of the Knights of the Golden Circle.

In late winter, George Baker, anxious to take part in the fighting, left the group and headed south to join the Confederate Army. While in Mexico, he was befriended by Rufus Henry Ingram, a thirty-year old former member of Quantrill's guerrilla band. He had taken part in the infamous raid on Lawrence, Kansas the previous August and was hiding out in Mexico. When told of the company of men at Poole's camp, the charismatic Ingram, convinced Baker that the best way to serve the south was to return to California with him and raise funds and recruits for the army.

They arrived at the camp during the early spring of 1864 and presented a letter commissioning him as a captain in the Confederate Army. Now the group had the experienced leader which they had needed. They formed themselves into Captain Ingram's Partisan Rangers and a plan of action was quickly drafted.

It was well known that large quantities of gold and silver were shipped by stage coach from Virginia City to Sacramento. Robbing one of these shipments would be an ideal way to get the necessary funds to recruit and equip a company of California volunteer soldiers for service to the Confederacy. On the sixth of May, two men, including Jim Grant, were sent to Placerville in E1 Dorado county to secure information on Wells Fargo bullion shipments. Grant immediately got drunk and tried to draft a local man into the guerrilla band. Captain Ingram, fearing that the plot may become exposed, called the men back to camp. Grant, the troublemaker, was sent packing and a new plan was devised.

It was decided to make a raid on San Jose, much like Quantrill had done on Lawrence, Kansas; looting any bank or business they happened upon. The gang now moved it's headquarters to a spot near the ranch of Preston Hodges in the Santa Cruz mountains above Saratoga. Hodges, a member of the knights, kept them supplied with provisions while they prepared for the raid. But their flurry of activity caught the attention of Santa Clara County Sheriff John Hicks Adams and his deputy R. B. Hall. The two lawmen managed to locate the guerrilla's camp and kept a wary eye on them. When the surveillance was discovered, Ingram had to abandon the planned raid and revert to his original proposal of hitting a Wells Fargo coach.

On June 22, Captain Ingram and his band, now consisting of Tom Poole, John Bouldware, George Baker, John Clendenning, and A1 Glasby, set off for Placerville. Three days later they arrived in the area and took rooms at the Somerset House, twelve miles south of town. They disguised themselves as a party of miners saying that they were on their way to the silver mines of Nevada.

They reconnoitered the route which the coaches followed through E1 Dorado county and decided that the best place for a holdup was at a long bend in the road a few miles east of Placerville. At this spot it was necessary for a driver to slow his team down to a walk in order to avoid tipping over the coach.

On the evening of the 30th, Ingram's Partisans stationed themselves in the brush bordering the trail. What they didn't know was that there were two coaches of the Pioneer Stage Line traveling in tandem on their way

to Sacramento. The first, with Ned Blair at the reins, was running a few minutes ahead of a stage being driven by Charley Watson. Both were loaded down with bullion worth more than \$40,000.

Just at dusk, Blair's coach rounded the bend and ran into the band of guerrillas, who had their weapons leveled at the driver. After the stage came to a stop, Poole, holding the lead team ordered Blair to throw down the bags of silver and gold.

"Come and get it!" growled the belligerent driver.

Two of the partisans climbed aboard the stage and tossed down four sacks of treasure to their comrades. Suddenly Charley Watson's coach pulled onto the scene. Seeing his way blocked, he stopped and jumped down out of the boot, making his way over to the leading stage. He was greeted by a host of guerrillas, all pointing guns in his direction. Young A1 Glasby covered him with a revolver and ordered him back to his stage.

Meanwhile Captain Ingram motioned for Blair to move his stage down the road. As he was complying with the order, one of his passengers, a Virginia City policeman named McDougal, pulled a pistol and fired a shot at the holdup men. The report of the weapon spooked the team and they bolted into a maddening run, carrying the stage into the night. The shooting had unnerved the guerrillas to such a degree that one of them suggested killing all of the passengers in Watson's coach.

Captain Ingram reassured the passengers saying, " We are not common bandits. We are Confederate soldiers and all we want from you is the Wells Fargo bullion to help recruit for the Confederate Army."

After Watson threw down the treasure sacks and the Wells Fargo box, Ingram handed the driver a receipt for the bullion which read:

June, 1864.

This is to certify that I have received from Wells Fargo & Co. the sum of \$_____ cash, for the purpose of outfitting recruits in California for the Confederate States Army. R. Henry Ingram, Captain, Commanding Co., C.S.A.

After this the partisans waved on the stage and stashed most of their loot in a nearby ravine, planning to send someone after it at a later date. They returned to the Somerset House, posted John Bouldware as a guard and bedded down for a few hours of sleep.

The two stage coaches arrived at Placerville after midnight and immediately notified E1 Dorado County Sheriff William Rogers of the robbery. A posse was quickly organized and split into two groups. One was to go north and the other south. The group heading south was comprised of deputies John Van Eaton, Joseph Staples and Town Constable George Ranney.

Several miles down the road they stumbled upon the trail of the partisans which led to the Somerset House. Van Eaton was sent back to notify the other lawmen, while Staples and Ranney rode up to the house and told the proprietress Maria Reynolds about the robbers. They asked if she had seen any strangers about. She nodded yes and motioned to the side door.

Bouldware sounded the alarm about the same time Ranney walked through the door and into the bedroom where the guerrillas were lounging about. Upon seeing the constable, they reached for their guns. Seeing his dangerous predicament, the nervy Ranney pleasantly greeted them asking,

"Did you see any horsemen pass this Way during the night?"

"No," they answered.

The constable smiled politely and walked coolly back out the door. On the porch he met Staples, who he warned away, telling him about the gunmen in the house.

The deputy pushed past him and entered the door with a leveled shotgun. Ingram was the first to see him and started to draw a revolver, but Staples covered him with the shotgun. The guerrilla leader raised his hands at the same moment that Tom Poole and Al Glasby pulled their pistols on the hapless lawman. He managed to get off one shot before he went down in a hail of gunfire. His shotgun blast hit Tom Poole in the face and knocked him to the floor with the left side of his face blown away.

The partisans charged out of the house, firing at Ranney who shot back as he ran for cover behind a nearby tree. But he was cut down mid stride by a flurry of pistol balls. Thinking the lawman dead, the guerrillas quickly mounted up and hurried away, leaving the wounded Tom Poole to fend for himself.

Returning to their hideout in the Santa Cruz mountains they lay low for two weeks and hatched another plan to finance their operations. The monthly payroll for the New Almaden Quicksilver Mines was brought up to the mountains via the afternoon stage from San Jose. Ingram plotted to rob the stage at a spot where the New Almaden Road starts up into the foothills.

On the night of July 14, they stopped at the farm of Edward Hill which was located near the intended holdup site, and asked to be put up for the night. During the following morning they inadvertently let it slip that they were planning to rob the stage. Hill passed the word on to a neighbor who rode into San Jose and informed Sheriff John Hicks Adams.

The burley Adams, a veteran of the Mexican War and one of the bravest lawmen in the state, assembled a posse and set out for the Hill ranch. The partisan's hideout was a small house near a grove of willow trees. When they arrived at the house, the posse quickly surrounded the building. The sheriff approached the front door and called out for the guerrillas to surrender. They responded by charging out of the house with their guns blazing. During the fight that followed over forty shots were exchanged at close range killing two of the partisans; John Clendenning, and John Bouldware, and wounding Al Glasby.

The lawmen suffered only one casualty as deputy J. H. Brownlee was hit, taking two bullets in the leg. However during a point-blank shoot out with John Clendenning, an extremely fortunate Sheriff Adams was hit in the chest. But the ball struck a heavy gold watch which he carried in his vest pocket and ricocheted harmlessly away.

During the battle, Captain Rufus Ingram and George Baker escaped and made their way back to Missouri where they spent the remainder of the war. Four companies of Union soldiers were sent into the Santa Cruz mountains to clear out what was left of Ingram's Partisan Rangers. In all, twelve men were arrested on charges that stemmed from guerrilla activities in the central coast region.

Meanwhile, back at Placerville, Pajaro's Tom Poole - his face still bandaged - was tried for the murder of Deputy Joseph Staples. Feelings in the area ran so high that it mattered little that he never fired his pistol, being downed immediately by the blast from the deputy's shotgun. On August 27, 1864, the jury found him guilty of first degree murder after only fifteen minutes of deliberations.

He was scheduled to be hanged during the month of October, but was granted a stay of execution until his case could be appealed to the state Supreme Court. As his case dragged on into 1865, the Civil War ended with General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse in April.

One by one his fellow guerrillas were tried and given short prison sentences or had all charges against them dropped. The Supreme Court finally ruled on Poole's case, upholding his conviction and setting September 29, as a new date for execution.

Time seems to have healed many of the old wounds made during the Confederate partisan's raid on the Placerville stage coaches. As the date for Poole's execution approached a number of petitions and letters requesting clemency for the old guerrilla were forwarded to Governor Fredrick Low from Monterey, Santa Cruz, and El Dorado counties. Among the signers were the sheriffs of all three counties as well as many members of the jury which had convicted him.

Former Judge James Johnson presented the case eloquently in a long letter which read in part,

"The foolish enterprise in which he and his comrades engaged was part and parcel of the gigantic rebellion now fortunately crushed." "Do not the hundreds of thousands of southern men slain sufficiently atone for the ... rebellion? Has not enough blood been shed? Can there be any great object in taking one more human life? Shall Poole be executed and Lee, Bragg, and Joe Johnston go at large?"

But all of these appeals, and the pleading of Poole's children, fell upon deaf ears. The governor would not be moved as there was still a price to be paid, and he would see it through.

It was almost six months after Appomattox when Tom Poole kept his date with the hangman at twelve noon on September 29, 1865. In the south, reconstruction was in full swing, while in the north the soldiers had lay down their arms and were returning home to plow their fields.

PART III

THE MASON-HENRY GANG

The next band of Confederate guerrillas to hide out at the mountain camp among the redwoods above Corralitos was the Mason-Henry Gang. This band of cutthroats was led by John Mason and James Henry, two southern boys who hid their depredations behind the semi-respectability of the secessionist cause.

The group was formed at the ranch of Judge George Belt, a wealthy merchant, who had been the alcalde of Stockton in 1849. Belt, a native of Tennessee, vigorously espoused the cause of the seceding states all through the Civil War, and to this end he armed and outfitted several bands of partisans including the Mason-Henry Gang. Using guerrilla tactics he hoped to establish the much-touted Pacific Republic; consisting of California, Nevada, the Arizona Territory, and Mexico.

During the month of October, 1864, as the Civil War on the east coast was reaching a climax, he called together a number of young secessionists from the San Joaquin Valley. Mason and Henry rose to prominence in the band. Under their tutelage the gang quickly deteriorated into one of the most savage brood of hooligans to ever operate in the state. But because they called themselves Confederate soldiers, they managed to

maintain a level of support among the copperheads in the area. Murder was their forte and they rode up and down the San Joaquin threatening to kill every "black republican" (abolitionist) they chanced to meet.

The first crimes attributed to the Mason-Henry Gang were two murders committed on November 10, 1864. There was a stage route, operated by the Butterfield Line, which ran north out of Los Angeles, over the Tejon Pass, and up the valley to Sacramento. As this road passed the east side of Tulare Lake there was a stage stop kept by Hr. Robinson, a 33 year-old native of Maine. The station was named Elkhorn, and a small settlement had sprung up around it.

Several days prior to the 10th, the presidential elections had been held in which Robinson, a strong Union supporter, had taken an active part. Following the voting a raucous party was held at the station and Robinson had gotten roaring drunk. While in this state, he had made certain remarks slurring the morals of all southern women.

Word of this incident reached Mason, Henry, and the boys who were camped in the area. They immediately saddled up and rode over to Elkhorn and inquired as to Robinson's whereabouts. The station keeper's wife said that her husband was working in a field a few miles from the house. The gang rode up the trail and happened upon Robinson who was heading home.

They drew their revolvers and surrounding him, asked if he had indeed insulted Confederate womanhood in such a way. He, of course, denied saying anything. Mason pointed his pistol directly at Robinson's face, forcing him to kneel on the ground and look directly into the barrel of the gun.

"Now swear to me that you never said anything like that about our women." He demanded.

The terrified man so swore and got to his feet.

"I'm going to kill you anyhow." said Mason, "You're nothing but a damn black Republican and should die."

He pulled the trigger, but the pistol misfired. Robinson made a dash for freedom but he was quickly cut down as the rest of the gang opened fire. He was hit several times and died almost immediately.

The gang galloped eight miles up the road and came to the next stage stop which was kept by Joseph Hawthorne. He too was shot and killed simply because he supported the Union cause. They searched the body for valuables and ransacked the station, which was just a tent, for food and whiskey.

They proceeded north, crossed over Pacheco Pass, and went into hiding at Tom Poole's old camp in the mountains above Corralitos. Word of the sensational murders spread quickly and the newspapers dubbed Mason and Henry "The Copperhead Murderers". California Governor Fredrick Low offered a reward of \$500 for the arrest of each of them.

While in hiding, the gang frequented Watsonville where Henry was known as Spotty McCauley, and Mason as John J. Monroe. The local secessionists continued to shelter them as they made periodic raids up and down the San Joaquin.

At one time during the summer of 1865, there were two companies of Ramon Pico's Native Californian Cavalry in the field looking for the gang. But no one could locate their hide out at Loma Prieta. In June, 1865, a posse of nine soldiers and five citizens led by John Hicks Adams of San Jose searched the area around the Panoche Valley in southern San Benito county in search of the gang after receiving a reliable tip that the cutthroats

were planning a raid on the ranches there. But a system of spies set up by the secessionists had warned the band of their approach, so by the time Sheriff Adams and his party arrived at Panoche, Mason and Henry were already retreating towards Corralitos.

Although the war had ended in April with Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the gang continued to fight, moving their headquarters to the San Bernardino Mountains. But time was running out for them.

On September 14, 1865, James Henry was betrayed by a drunken gang member to San Bernardino Sheriff Ben Matthews. The sheriff gathered together a posse and they found Henry camped at Santa Jacinto Canyon, about twenty-five miles from town and killed him in a shoot-out.

James Mason continued to run with a \$500 reward hanging over his head. The following April, while hiding in the mountains near Fort Tejon, he tried to recruit one Ben Hayfield, an Indian fighter of some repute, into his gang. But Hayfield had other ideas, as he was aware of the reward offered for Mason, and planned to collect it.

The two men were always suspicious of one another and kept a close eye on each other's movements. One night when they were preparing to bed down, Hayfield made his move, creeping across the room with his pistol at the ready. Mason saw him and reached for his own gun, but it was too late. Mayfield's shot passed through his neck, killing him instantly. The last of the guerrillas died as he had lived - through the barrel of a gun.

EPILOGUE

The Confederate hideout below Loma Prieta passed into the hands of lumbermen and many of the redwoods were stripped away. Logging roads crisscrossed the mountains making the area easily accessible. On January 4, 1884, it was to witness one last flurry of violence, when the Tejada and Leal gang up from Watsonville hid out at the old campsite while they waited for their deadly showdown with Under Sheriff John Gaffy and his posse.

Source

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