

GHOST TOWNS OF THE SA

LEXINGTON ONCE METROPOLIS OF MOUNTAIN AREA

Boasted Variety Of Business
Houses, Eight Saw Mills,
As Early As Sixties.

By JOHN V. YOUNG.
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Chapter XVII.

LEXINGTON BEGINS.

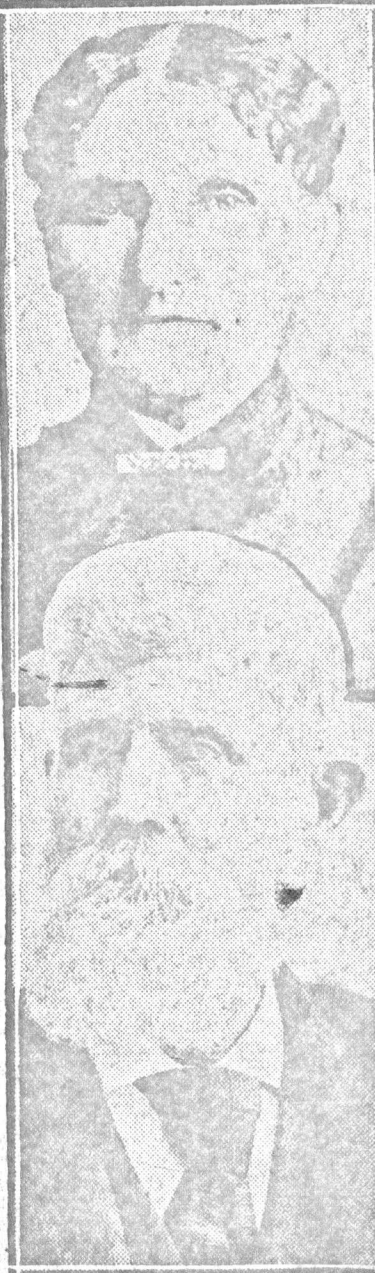
Just when Jones' Mill ceased to be and Lexington began is not clear, but it was not long after California was admitted to the Union that the place began to be noticed as one of the booming communities of Santa Clara county.

Certainly by 1867 it had become one of the county's most active centers of commerce, while its neighbor, soon to become Los Gatos, was still known as Forbes' Mill, and was nothing but a dusty cross-roads, a place one went through en route to Lexington!

WELL SITUATED.

Situated as it was—and is today—two miles above Forbes' mill, in a grassy flat where the Jones hill road emerged from Lime Kiln gulch, the town had many natural advantages. All about it were virgin redwoods, through it ran a lively stream in El Arroyo de Los Gatos—and it was the junction of roads, changing place for horses after the hard pull over Jones' hill and later over the steep and narrow turnpike stretches out of Forbes' mill.

In order to prevent travelers from going free over the old road to and from Forbes' mill, a toll-house was located about where the bridge at Lexington now stands in the present highway. Especially for horsemen was the toll gate provided, as most of the heavy traffic preferred the turnpike to the hard pull over Jones hill, but riders found little difficulty negotiating the old route. This tollhouse and gate were superseded by the toll station at the edge of Los Gatos in later years.

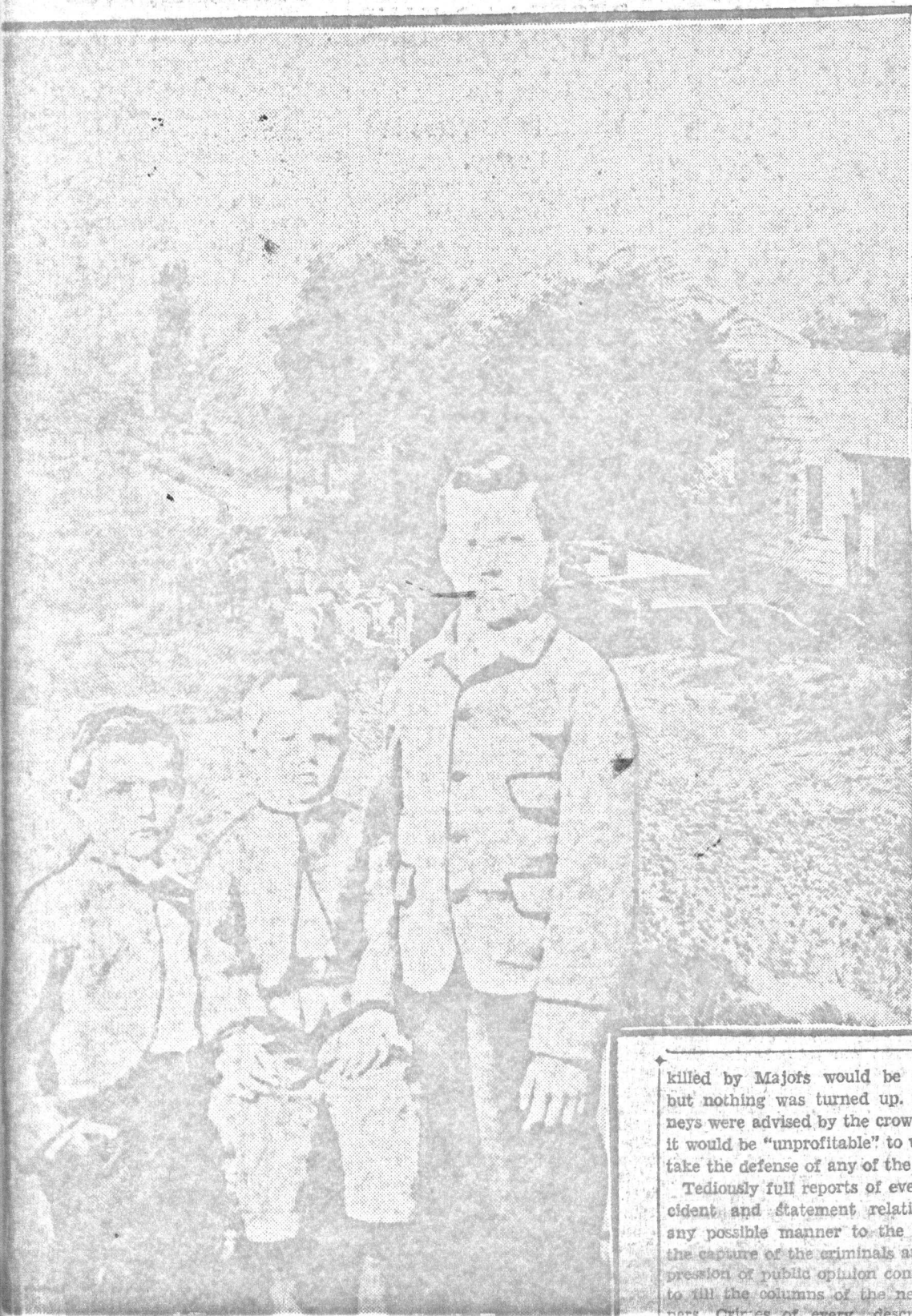


A conflicting account has it that the place was named by J. P. Henning, one of the two who bought out Buffalo Jones, and who is accredited in this account with having laid out the town in 1860. Henning came from Lexington, Missouri.

At any rate, it was named from one of the several Lexingtons scattered around the United States, probably before 1860 and certainly no later than that year.

A, SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 1, 1934.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS



DOUGHERTY MILL ROAD SCENE OF NOTORIOUS CRIME

'McIntyre-Renowden' Murder Forms Vivid Chapter In Mountain Annals.

weeks hence. Meanwhile preparations for Majors' trial, postponed because of the delay in trying Jewell, were opened.

MAJORS GETS LIFE.

Majors' trial started Saturday morning, May 12, and was made more exciting in the midst of it by a full and damning confession by Joseph Jewell, definitely implicating Majors. On Sunday morning, May 27, the jury brought in a verdict of the first degree, with life imprisonment.

On Saturday, June 3, Jewell was sentenced to death on the gallows, while Showers and Majors were formally committed to the penitentiary for life by Judge Belden.

EXECUTION STAYED.

The date for execution, July 27, was postponed until November 30 by Governor George Stoneman on a petition for reprieve, despite furious comment from all sides that filled the newspapers for weeks.

As a final windup of the affair which heaped notoriety on the county not surpassed until the present day, Jewell was hung at San Quentin on November 30, 1883, while Showers was stabbed to death in a prison row some time later.

L. L. Majors met his death in a prison break at Folsom several years afterward, one of the wildest escapades in the annals of crime.

LEXINGTON GROWS.

But in the tragedy and strife and the hardy life of those early days, Lexington was growing then. Isaac Paddock had erected a large hotel and stage station where the Santa Cruz and San Jose six-horse stage coaches stopped, and his wife, Sarah Paddock, carried on the business after Paddock's death.

George Colgrove, stage coach driver and operator of later railroad fame, at one time operated two stage barns here also.

FLOURISHING TRADE.

Profiting from the stage runs and

killed by Majors would be found, but nothing was turned up. Attorneys were advised by the crowd that it would be "unprofitable" to undertake the defense of any of the three.

Tediously full reports of every incident and statement relating in any possible manner to the crime, the capture of the criminals and expression of public opinion continued to fill the columns of the newspapers. Crimes of every description

ceded by the toll station at the edge of Los Gatos in later years.

INDUSTRIES LISTED.

The year 1867 is mentioned particularly, for in that year the Pacific Coast Business directory gives the place prominence and lists the following business establishments:

George N. Adams, pipe manufacturer (redwood pipe used at the mines at Guadalupe and Almaden). S. H. and J. W. Chase, lumber dealers (mentioned at length in an earlier installment of this series).

Elledge and Seanor, blacksmiths. W. S. Hall, wheelwright. J. W. Lyndon, lumber, groceries, etc.

Isaac E. Paddock, blacksmith, hotel keeper and postmaster.

The Santa Clara Petroleum company.

Eight saw mills are listed in the directory, including two operated by John (Young) McMillen, and one each by the Moody brothers, C. Thomas, E. Froment, William P. Dougherty, Martin Covey and brother, and S. H. & J. W. Chase. All were run by water power except those of Froment and the Moodys, which were operated by steam.

LEATHER IMPORTANT.

Although there were no tanneries in Lexington at this particular time, leather formed an important part of the industrial life of the time, the directory states:

"Owing to the large size, heavy and firm character of the hides of the cattle slaughtered here (Santa Clara valley) the sole leather manufactured here is superior to that produced in the tanneries of the eastern states. The bark of the peculiar species of oak (*Lithocarpus densiflora*) found along the coast from Monterey Bay to Mendocino (and particularly in the Santa Cruz mountains) noted for its excess of tannin, is peculiarly adapted to this purpose; and many of these ancient denizens of the soil have been stripped bare to serve this important end.

DENUDE HISTORIC TREE.

"To such an extent has this been carried on in some instances that even the ancient oak upon which the venerated Padre Junipero Serra and his followers commemorated the landing of the first white men upon these shores at the Bay of Monterey, by cutting a large cross deep into the trunk, has been entirely denuded of its bark by some vandal, whose bump of reverence for the past had been similarly razed down by the utilitarian spirit of the present.

"The largest tanneries of the state, on account of the peculiar advantages afforded by that region, are located in Santa Cruz county," the directory concludes. For many years, however, long lines of pack mules loaded with slabs of tan bark, were a common sight in Lexington and elsewhere in the mountain region.

CONFLICT ON NAME.

Lexington was named by John Logan, who moved here with his family in the early fifties from Lexington, Kentucky, according to the recollection of George H. McMurry, city treasurer of Los Gatos today, who was born in Lexington in 1865.

ceded about the United States, probably before 1860 and certainly no later than that year.

FIRST FAMILIES.

Among its first families, both in point of historic precedence and in social esteem were the McMurrays and McMillins, who were intermarried. Dr. W. S. McMurry, born in Kentucky, in 1818, was a prominent Louisville physician who saw service in the Mexican war. He followed the gold rush to California, crossing the Isthmus of Panama to San Francisco, and mining at Grass Valley before moving to Lexington (then Jones' Mill) in the early fifties.

Before coming to California he had married Olive A. McMillin, sister of John Y. McMillin, one of the most famous mill-men of this region in the years to come. McMillin preceded Dr. McMurry to California in 1852, and shortly after arriving at Lexington, married Parneta Howell, a daughter of Watkins F. Howell of Reservoir ranch.

COVERED WAGON SAGA.

Watkins F. Howell, whose prowess as a bear hunter was described last week, was one of the earliest settlers in the entire region. The story of the Howell family is the typical "covered-wagon" saga of the fifties—an entire tribe of "in-laws" starting out together for the new El Dorado.

In the party were Watkins Howell and his wife, Mary J., their three small children, Ellen, Parneta and Nancy; Howell's father, James Howell, and Mrs. Howell's parents, Alexander and Sarah Ogan and their large family of six girls and three boys, mostly grown. This was in the year 1852, when the party left Kentucky, Missouri.

En route to California a baby girl was born to Mrs. Ogan. As the party was then approaching the Sierra Nevada range, the child was named Sierra Nevada Ogan, a true covered-wagon baby.

They arrived in California in the fall of the same year. The Howells stopped at Grass Valley to mine for two years before joining Alexander Ogan and his family, who had journeyed on to Berryessa.

TITLE CONTESTED.

Like many another settler in this valley of the period, Ogan took up a homestead, but was forced to spend thousands of dollars clearing his title to the property from the multifold claims made against it and every other square foot of land in the valley.

After two years at Berryessa, Howell purchased from a man named Shearer, an early homesteader, 320 acres of land at what is now known as the Reservoir ranch of the San Jose Water company.

Here he moved his growing family, which now included Alexander M. Howell, who was born at Berryessa June 13, 1854, the first "native son" in the family. Howell planted an orchard and vineyard, and spent most of the succeeding years taking out split lumber and tan-bark.

DRAINED LAGOON.

In the early sixties he drained the upper lagoon (now Howell reservoir) and planted the wonderfully fertile peat lands of the lake bot-



The story of the Howell family, a typical saga of the early middle west. F. Howell (upper left) and their three sons (right), while in the canyon above Los Gatos, looking toward Lexington, with the

tom in vegetables, fruit and grapes, for which there was a great demand at the near-by sawmills, and at the Almaden and Guadalupe mines.

With his extensive ranch holdings and an increasing family he was kept on the run until 1876, when he sold the reservoir site to the San Jose Water company for \$2000, according to his son, J. Frank Howell of San Jose. The following year his daughter, Emma, died at the age of 19, the first of the family to go.

SELLS PROPERTY.

In 1879 Howell sold the rest of the ranch to Frank Baker, a relative of Frank Baker, business manager of the Mercury Herald, and moved to Los Gatos, where he and his family lived until 1883, when they moved to Washington state, near where the Scott Hall and Elledge families, Lexington pioneers, had previously settled.

Their family now included Parneta, Nancy, Alexander, Emma, Frances, James F., Charles W., Sarah Louise and John Martin Howell, and Ellen Belcher, daughter of Mrs. Howell by a previous marriage, who married Josiah Chase, noted mill man.

Nancy married Chase's brother, Foster, and Parneta married John Y. McMillin.

BRIDES IN DEMAND.

Housekeepers were much in demand in those days, and girls could well afford to pick and choose, as they were in the minority in a world of men.

Four of the six Ogan girls were grown when they arrived in Berryessa, and were soon carried to the altar. Josie Ogan came to Lexington to visit her sister, Mrs. Howell, and met Charles Paddock, brother of the Lexington hotel owner. They were soon married.

But all was not happy with the Howells and Ogans—stark tragedy struck suddenly and often. In 1854 Elizabeth Ogan, who had married a man named Willis, was stabbed to death by a bandit on her doorstep at her home near Berryessa, one of the most brutal murders in the bloody early history of the valley.

IN TERRIFIC WRECK.

In 1891 Mr. and Mrs. Howell and their granddaughter, Maude Chase of Wrights, who had been visiting

in Washington with Scott Hall and his daughter, Mrs. Ray Elledge, were passengers on an ill-fated train en route from Portland to California.

Near Salem, Oregon, the train plunged through a trestle to drop 50 feet into a marsh. Six were killed and 95 injured, including Mrs. Howell, who was critically hurt. After six weeks she had recovered sufficiently to be brought home, and was conveyed in a special car provided by the railroad company to San Jose, where she lived for a year with her daughters, Mrs. McMillin and Mrs. Chase.

She then returned to Washington, where she died in 1894, never having fully recovered from her injuries. She is buried in Rosalia, Washington, by the side of her son, John, who preceded her in 1837. Her husband died June 2, 1896.

NOTORIOUS CRIME.

But the Howell family was not the only one which tragedy stalked in those early days of violence—it was only a mile or two from Lexington that William P. Renowden and Archie McIntyre were horribly murdered; a crime that has come down to the present day as the "McIntyre-Renowden" murder.

The account of the deed is contained at great length in the San Jose Mercury starting Tuesday morning, March 13, 1883, two days after the crime, and occupying columns of space every day thereafter for months.

Flames from their little mountain cabin on the old Dougherty mill road attracted several residents of the region to the scene early Tuesday morning. Renowden was found near the smoking remains of the cabin, shot full of holes and partly burned. Within the ruins of the cabin the charred body of his partner, Archie McIntyre, was discovered. He, too, had been shot.

Woodsmen who were well liked throughout the mountains, the two men were widely known, and their death shocked the entire county. A searching investigation was launched at once.

MAJORS IMPLICATED.

At a coroner's inquest the following morning, L. L. Majors, a saloon keeper of ill repute, implicated one Joseph Jewell, itinerant painter, and



mountain people, is told in the life of Mary Jane and Watkins in the background appears the town of Lexington after it had the livery stable of George Colgrove and others who operated there, as they were in the early nineties. Lower left is a view of the railroad on the left and the old turnpike on the right.

John Showers, rancher, giving damaging testimony against them.

Showers disappeared in the hue and cry that at once arose, but Jewell was captured by Deputy Sheriff George E. Bennett of Gilroy the next Monday evening.

But when the inquest was resumed the following day, Showers promptly made a full confession, and named Majors as instigator of the plot.

According to Showers, he and Jewell went to the Renowden cabin at Majors' suggestion, declaring that Majors had armed them with a pistol, and gave them a pair of pliers with which to "pull out the old man's finger-nails to make him talk." Renowden was reputed at that time to have had large sums of money hidden about the place.

PLAN FAILED.

But the plan, carefully worked out, failed to operate on schedule, and in the battle that arose, the two men killed McIntyre and Renowden. Returning to Los Gatos, they told their story to Majors, who gave them a flask of whiskey and \$5 and told them to "flee for their lives." Majors was promptly arrested and whisked out of Los Gatos.

An impromptu vigilantes committee which had been watching Majors' home (composed of W. B. Sauffley, F. W. Perkins, E. B. Morrill, Peter Fischer, T. B. Proctor, W. H. Lundy and E. F. Reynolds), had prevented his escape on suspicion that he was implicated in the double killing, but was not aware at the time of Major's arrest of his actual part in the crime, or, as the Mercury account states, "he would not have been permitted to leave Los Gatos alive."

This story was substantiated in detail the following day when the inquest was resumed, this time at the court house in San Jose, when Showers made his formal confession in full.

Majors refused to testify at the time, having no attorney, and was excused.

JURY'S VERDICT.

Verdict of the coroner's jury was reported as finding that McIntyre and Renowden had met their death from pistol shots inflicted by Joseph

Jewell, and that said Jewell was assisted by one John Showers, and aided and encouraged by L. L. Majors, and afterward assisted by said L. L. Majors to escape: "and we the said jury do therefore charge said Joseph Jewell, John Showers and L. L. Majors with the murder of said William P. Renowden (and Archie McIntyre)."

Members of the jury were J. H. Lyndon, William C. Shore, Owen Gafney, Thomas F. Simmons, T. S. Cleland, J. W. Lyndon, George Seannor, C. C. Call, E. E. Dow and E. A. Kennedy.

Majors was described in following accounts as "an attorney, blacksmith, carpenter and carriage maker, an active member of the church (in San Jose) and temperance worker, a member of a Grand Army post and of the Los Gatos lodge of A. O. U. W."

JEWELL CAPTURED.

Early Monday morning, March 20 word was received of the capture of Joseph Jewell at Fresno, whence he was returned by Sheriff Branham. Met at the jail by a huge mob, Jewell was rushed into a cell only after a show of arms by the sheriff. The cell in which Jewell was placed was the one occupied by Tiburcio Vasquez, notorious bandit, several years before.

Jewell had previously been arrested by Sheriff Meaney near Los Banos, but was turned loose because he did not meet the description of him given by Majors, but was later recaptured after a hair-raising chase down the San Joaquin valley by Deputy Sheriff Jack Davis of Merced county. Sheriff Branham of Santa Clara county, and others.

Arraigned before Justice Vance the afternoon of March 20, all three men, Jewell, Showers and Majors, pleaded not guilty, and time for preliminary examination was set for March 26, the following Monday, at 10 a. m.

MOB GATHERS.

Meanwhile, a small mob of curiosity seekers continued to gather at the jail, while indignation ran unabated in Los Gatos where Major's saloon was wrecked. A cellar under the saloon was excavated in the belief that the bodies of at least one murdered man thought to have been

the capture of the criminals and expression of public opinion continued to fill the columns of the newspapers. Crimes of every description were laid to the door of Majors, and the hunt for the bodies of his supposed previous victims continued.

2500 VISIT JAIL.

A brief account appearing in the Mercury March 25 described visits at the jail of 2500 people. "Majors was gloomy as usual, and applied himself closely to reading a Bible, while Showers seemed as proud as a corporal with his first stripes. Jewell maintained a cheerful appearance all day, although he was apparently very nervous."

A ring-around-the-rosy started proceedings Monday morning, March 26, when the preliminary examination was scheduled, the court jammed to overflowing with spectators, and W. B. Hardy, attorney for L. L. Majors, demanding a private hearing. Jewell and Showers were still without counsel. Started behind closed doors late in the afternoon, the hearing was resumed the following morning when E. B. Morrill, S. G. Benson, E. K. Dunlap, W. C. Morrow and E. T. Sawyer, newspapermen, appeared in the peculiar position of reporters designated by John Showers as his counsel, thwarting a move of Majors' counsel to exclude the press from hearing.

PRESS EXCLUDED.

Showers' testimony occupied the entire hearing of Tuesday, but the following day Hardy succeeded in having the press excluded from the hearing, bringing wrathful comment from the Mercury.

But a telephone concealed in the dome of the courtroom disclosed the entire proceedings to the indefatigable reporters of the day, and full accounts duly appeared in the papers as usual.

Showers' examination continued, and several witnesses were questioned, including John Koppitz, H. C. Scheffer, Hugh McLeod, Z. A. Riggs, John Gafney, Martin Velasco, F. W. Perkins, Joseph Grant and W. B. Sauffley.

"Grapevine" telephone and reporters armed with opera glasses reported the next day's proceedings in equally full style, together with pungent comments on the apoplectic wrath of Hardy, Majors' counsel, at his inability to muzzle the press. The case was closed pending the filing of information by the district attorney, J. H. Campbell, which was done Friday, March 30.

TRIAL IS SET.

After a heated wrangle over technicalities in which the defense counsel, W. B. Hardy, lost every point, trial dates were set by Superior Judge Belden for Jewell, May 1; Majors, May 7; Showers, May 14. Counsel was appointed for Jewell, W. L. Gill appearing as counsel for Showers.

The body of Archie McIntyre was exhumed on a court order on April 23, and on examination revealed a bullet wound through the heart, corroborating Showers' testimony.

After a prolonged trial, Joseph Jewell was found guilty of murder in the first degree on Friday, May 12, and time of sentence set for two

driver and operator of later road fame, at one time operated two stage barns here also.

FLOURISHING TRADE.

Profiting from the stage runs and from the many teams that ran through the village, Scott Hall, a wheelwright, did a flourishing business in conjunction with his son-in-law, William H. Elledge, a blacksmith, who built a home here in 1865 for his bride, Pay Hall. The house still stands. Elledge moved to Spangle, Washington, in 1860, and died there five years later. Mrs. Elledge died 1923.

Members of the Hall family, who came to Lexington in 1857, later achieved fame, including Austin Hall, noted writer of magazine fiction who died in 1933. He was born in Lexington in 1880, a nephew of Scott Hall.

A brother of Pay Hall, Horace E. "Hod" Hall, who was also born in Lexington, in 1864, died in Spangle, Washington, in 1922 (Feb. 15).

Lexington, incidentally, was the social center of the mountain region prior to the eighties, the scene of many an oldtime dance attended by ranchers and woodsmen from far and wide.

That there was little love lost in that period between the mountain residents and those of the valley towns, an amusing anecdote of 1864 reveals. Ten couples left Lexington one night to attend a dance in Santa Clara, where they were greeted with the appellation of "red-wood splinters."

CHALLENGE IS PASSED.

Hearing this, Bill Elledge, the young and brawny village blacksmith, who was one of the party, stepped out on the floor and offered to demonstrate that he and his pals were more like saw-logs than splinters, if anyone cared to step a few rounds. None did, and the cognomen was discreetly forgotten by the Santa Clarans thereafter.

With the arrival of the railroad in Los Gatos, when it became apparent that Lexington was to suffer, the first families moved away. The Halls, Elledges, McMurtrys, Howells, and others were gone. Stages operated from the Ten-Mile house (later Hotel Lyndon) at Los Gatos until the railroad tunnels were completed.

COVEL BUYS HOTEL.

But as the village waned, Los Gatos grew. Martin Covell, an early mill man who bought stumpage from Howell and made enough money to build a saw mill in the upper canyon, later purchased the Ten-Mile house and all of the lands where the S. P. depot now stands in Los Gatos—it was a hayfield then.

But Covell went into the red on the deal, and lost the property in 1868 to John Lyndon, another prominent early-day resident of Lexington, who had previously owned the property.

Lyndon moved the hotel across the street to the present site of Hotel Lyndon to make way for the railroad in 1877.

Next Week: Lexington wanes as the railroad comes to the mountains, and Alma springs up a mile south; the story of the forest house, and of some more early settlers in the region.