



Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation

July Newsletter, 2020

*Since July 25 is the anniversary of his **SUPPOSED** death, this month we will tell a tale of Joaquin Murrieta, the most famous (or infamous) outlaw of Gold Rush California.*

Part 1



JOAQUIN, THE MOUNTAIN ROBBER.

Joaquin, the Mountain Robber
(Sketch done for the Sacramento Union newspaper circa 1850)

It is impossible to completely separate historical fact from fiction and legend, so please enjoy this attempt as a good story. By the way, did you know that Joaquin was the inspiration for the character of Zorro!

Joaquin came to California with his wife (Rosa or Rosita) and some of their brothers sometime around 1849 from Sonora, Mexico. The group headed toward Murphy's Diggings in the Mother Lode where things took a tragic turn. Shortly after arrival in the mining region, Joaquin's brother, Jesus, was accused of stealing a mule and hung by a mob. The mob turned on Rosa, abusing her, beating Joaquin, and driving family and associates from their claims. Since the end of the Mexican War, California was no longer part of Mexico, and Anglo miners felt justified in expelling Mexican "foreigners" by any means possible. This series of events launched a career that paralyzed California in

fear and created the legendary bandito, Joaquin Murrieta.



The Murrieta bands ranged from Shasta, California south to Sonora in Old Mexico. They herded mustangs as well as stock "acquired" along the way to be sold. Horse theft, robberies, and murders were common trademarks of these roving bands of mesteneros (mustangers), particularly victimizing the Chinese. Despite this, Joaquin was known to take his leisure gambling and dealing "monte" which was a favorite card game in Gold Rush fandango halls and frequenting Mexican saloons in Drytown, Amador City, Sutter Creek, Jackson Gate, and Jackson. He was also accused of several robberies and murders in the area beginning in 1851. Several people in the area claimed to have seen him on the roads between Drytown, Jackson, Volcano, and Mokelumne Hill.



Jackson - 1849

By early 1853, things had gotten so hot that Governor John Bigler and the new State of California issued a warrant for no less than FIVE Joaquins with a promise of a \$1,000 reward alive or (preferably) dead. Newspapers of the time laid practically every theft, murder, or robbery at the feet of the "terrible bandit", Joaquin, despite the fact that nobody really seemed to know what he looked like or where he lived.

Crime in California was rampant and the telegraph, which was invented in 1844, was practically non-existent here. News traveled only as fast as a man could ride. In May of 1853, Governor Bigler authorized a company of Rangers to be raised in Quartzburg, near Hornitos in Mariposa County, long thought to be a central location for Mexican horse theft gangs. A long hot June and July in the southern Central Valley followed, wearing down men and horses.



Then, on a hot July 25, 1853, this exhausted group of State sponsored Rough Riders calling themselves "California Rangers", led by Mexican War veteran Captain Henry (Harry) Love surprised and attacked a group of 20 to 40 Mexican mesterneros camped along Cantua Creek southwest of present day Fresno. Claims of Mexicanos killed ranged from 3 to 20 including the wanted Joaquin Murrieta and his segundo Manuel Duarte (or Garcia), also called Tres Dedos (three digits) and who, only after his death, the Rangers referred to as Three Fingered Jack. Positive identities of those killed as well as those who participated in the killings remain unclear and hotly debated, with volumes written attempting to "clear the confusion".

**WILL BE
EXHIBITED
FOR ONE DAY ONLY!**

AT THE STOCKTON HOUSE!

THIS DAY, AUG. 12, FROM 9 A. M., UNTIL 6 P. M.

THE HEAD

Of the renowned Bandit!

JOAQUIN!

AND THE

HAND OF THREE FINGERED JACK!

THE NOTORIOUS ROBBER AND MURDERER.

"JOAQUIN" and "THREE-FINGERED JACK" were captured by the State Rangers, under the command of Capt. Harry Love, at the Arroya Cantina, July 24th. No reasonable doubt can be entertained in regard to the identification of the head now on exhibition, as being that of the notorious robber, Joaquin Murietta, as it has been recognised by hundreds of persons who have formerly seen him.

In addition to those who claim Joaquin and Manuel were killed at Cantua Creek, some believe this was the wrong group, although the State paid the Rangers an additional \$5,000 bonus for a "job well done". The real Joaquin may have lived out his life in either Mexico or a small ranch in Niles Canyon, California. Some claim Joaquin never even existed, but was invented by a blame hungry population. It is interesting to note that the killing of this "terrible bandit" had no effect on crime in California or the mines. For years afterward people claimed to have met or seen him. Killings and robberies continued to be attributed to him or remnants of his band who had survived the fight at Cantua Creek. In 1853, Joaquin would have been about 24 years old. Is it fact, is it legend, or just imagination? What do you think?

Coming Next Month
Part 2 - Was this really the end?

Whether it's a love of our heritage, a special connection to our town's

diverse, deeply rooted cultures, or a desire to improve your community, every donor's passion for Sutter Creek is unique. A gift to Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation is the perfect way to fund your passion and watch it prosper. By connecting people who care with causes that matter, we help ensure a stronger, healthier tomorrow. We provide a simple, powerful and highly personal approach to giving. (Donations to SCCBF are received through the Amador Community Foundation.)

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