

Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation

August Newsletter, 2020

The Bandit Joaquin - Part II A Good Story With an Amador County Connection



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

It seems a little strange in our world today of instant communication and megapixel photographs that anyone as legendary as Joaquin Murrieta could also be so "LEGEND"-ary! There are no documented photographs or direct quotes yet found that lend this ghostly, mythical figure any solid substance. There is little doubt, however, that Joaquin and his compadres were active in this area. One of his riders, Cheverino Cruz, was hung on Jackson's infamous "Hanging Tree" on Main Street. A miners trial condemned Cruz after his own confession to the

robbery of two Frenchmen and the murder of one. Several other local robberies and murders were believed to be the work of the Murrieta gang.

Yet today, 167 years after his supposed death along Cantua Creek at the hands of Captain Harry Love and his Rangers, passionate debate rages over virtually every aspect of his 23 years of life as well as his end at the Arroyo Cantua.



When the Rangers surprised a group of Mexicans camped along Cantua Creek in July of 1853, one Ranger said that he recognized Murrieta which caused the Company to open fire. The bandits returned fire and in the melee that followed, at least two Mexicans were killed, and two more captured. The rest - possibly as many as two dozen - escaped into the brush and creek bed on foot abandoning horses, saddles, several revolvers, and miscellaneous other equipment. Some even left their boots! Significantly, the two Mexicans killed were reportedly Joaquin Murrieta and Tres Dedos (3 Fingers). Of the other two that were captured, one drowned or was shot while escaping and the other hung by a mob.

All this gear and weaponry was claimed by the Rangers as "war booty" with some being sold to supplement their meager salaries and some kept as trophies and mementos. There were also many usable guns, saddles, and bridles.



Early Californio spurs of the type worn by Mexicans and Anglos alike in Gold Rush California.

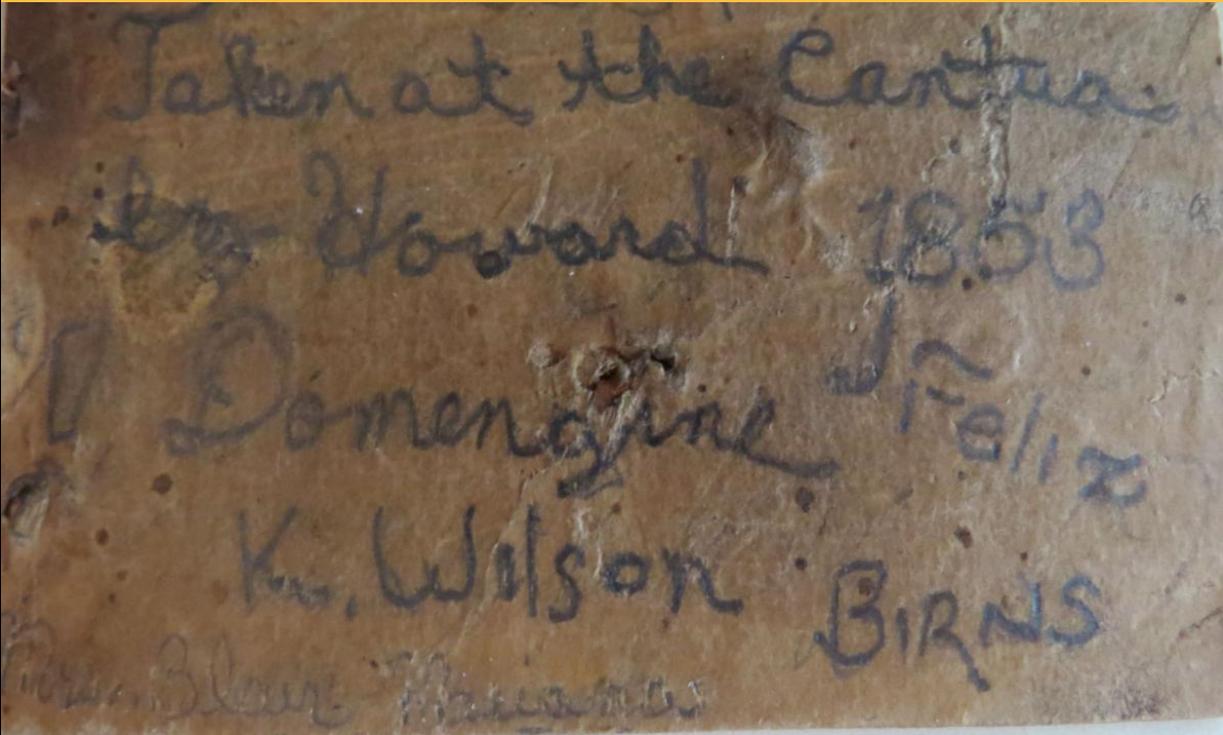
In 2018, a local resident was fortunate enough to acquire one of these reportedly captured weapons from the fight. A trade resulted in a Colt .44 Model 1848 Holster Pistol - also known as the 1st Model Dragoon. The serial number revealed the gun had been manufactured in 1848 although original shipping records had been destroyed in a fire at the Colt factory in 1864. The pistol was accompanied by an original 1850's holster, an original powder flask, and a handful of .44 caliber lead balls.



Among collectors it is exciting and unusual to find a gun that old that hasn't been upgraded, repaired, or "fooled with". For this

collector, the search for an original Gold Rush pistol had finally ended after years of pursuit.

After the trade was completed, a mystery developed when a friend stopped by to say he had some "stuff" that belonged with the pistol. The "stuff" consisted of a couple of small cards with information hand written on the back of each.



One card read "taken at the Cantua by Howard 1853". It also listed names: Domengine, J Feliz, K Wilson, Birns. The significance of the "Cantua" and "1853" was known, but who was "Howard"? The card brings us back to Joaquin, more research and more mystery. Here is what was revealed:

- "Howard" was the last name of two brothers listed as California Rangers under Captain Harry Love and claiming to be present at the Cantua Creek fight. The Howard brothers had a horse ranch near Quartzburg and Hornitos in the early 1850's and supplied horses to the Rangers for their pursuit of the Murrieta bandits.
- J Feliz was Murrieta's brother-in-law and the man who guided the Rangers to the camp at Cantua Creek in order to evade arrest.
- Domengine is the name of a family who lived in the area and guided riding tours to the site in the early 20th century.
- K Wilson was the married name of the niece of Manuel Durate - Three Fingered Jack.
- Birns is unknown by this spelling, but in that same area are Burns Ranch, Burns Creek, Burns (townsite), etc.

All this may mean absolutely nothing but it IS interesting circumstantial evidence. Who wrote the card, when, and why?

The second card, from John C. Begovich's campaign for Supervisor in 1984, returns the mystery to Amador County. This leads to speculation that he is the J.B. referred to on the back as

having gotten the gun from Fountain's Antiques in Amador City.

For . . .

SUPERVISOR FIRST DISTRICT

AMADOR COUNTY

ELECT

JOHN C. BEGOVICH

Primary Election, June 5, 1984

The back of this card strengthens the Amador County connection. It states "from Fountains to J.B. see receipt for M.B. - Amador City - Fountain's Antiques. From Mrs. Dom." John and Florence Fountain ran an antique store in Amador City in the building at the corner of Hwy 49 and Keystone Alley. They were avid collectors of California Gold Rush items concentrating primarily on bottles about which John wrote several articles and books.

FROM Fountains to J.B. - see
recept. for M.B.
Amador City - Fountain's
Antiques
from Mrs. Dom.

The M.B. mentioned may be Milos (Sharkey) Begovich who owned Sharkey's Casino in Gardnerville, Nevada. Sharkey's was known for their extensive collection of western artifacts in their museum located within the casino.

The card also says "Fountain's Antiques from Mrs. Dom." Could this be Mrs. Domengine whose husband conducted horseback

tours of the battle site and also collected related artifacts?

As some of this is speculation and conjecture it will have to remain - A Good Story!

Coming Next Month History of the Sutter Creek Auditorium

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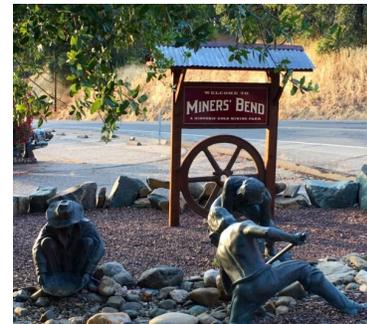
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SCCBF Community Development

MINERS' BEND

The Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation transformed one of Sutter Creek's parking lots into an amazing historical display of Gold Mining history. Artifacts from the Argonaut Mine and the Sutter Gold Mine have been donated to show visitors and residents the rich Sutter Creek Gold Mining history. Relax and enjoy a picnic at one of the tables in the park.



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.)

