

SHERIFF JOSEPH ZWINGE A RESPECTED LAWMAN

For 28 years, from 1923 to 1950, Calaveras County Sheriff Joe Zwinge stood tall among the lawmen of California and the West.

Few persons, in the 138-year history of this county have enjoyed a wider circle of friends or were held in greater respect than was Sheriff Zwinge.

Elected during the prohibition years when many law enforcement officers chose for a price, to wink at the illicit liquor trade, Joe Zwinge was recognized by California sheriffs as a man who strictly enforced the 18th Amendment. Calaveras was known as a "clean county," for Zwinge refused to overlook the bootleggers, prostitution and slot machines. And, he came down hard on cattle rustlers and all other forms of crime.

The descendant of Calaveras County pioneers, he was the grandson of Joseph Zwinge who arrived in New York from Prussia in 1851 and shortly thereafter, joined the California Gold Rush.

Grandfather Zwinge had quickly tired of drudgery in a New York sugar factory and 1853 found him operating a tenthouse restaurant in a wild and roisterous southern Mother Lode mining camp called San Andreas.

Zwinge's "American Restaurant" stood on Main Street on the very spot where the Calaveras County Library Building now stands. The restaurant was an immediate success but within months the canvas and scrap wood structure was destroyed by fire.

Zwinge hammered together a wooden building on the same location and it stood until the "great fire of 1857" leveled most of the central area of the camp, including his new restaurant.

Still undaunted, Joseph Zwinge and his brother, Antone, who also had arrived in California, erected the present massive walled stone building that houses today's Calaveras County Library. The stone came from a quarry on the Zwinge homestead on Murray Creek and was hauled to the building site by burros.

The new stone structure, in addition to housing the restaurant, served as a hotel with several guest bedrooms. The kitchen was quite large with its own well and a windlass to hoist water buckets, taking up the center of the room.

In 1865, attractive, red haired Elizabeth Evers arrived in San Francisco and a few months later, on October 4 of that year, she and Joseph Zwinge were married in St. Mary's Cathedral.

The newly married couple returned to San Andreas where Zwinge resumed his remunerative restaurant and

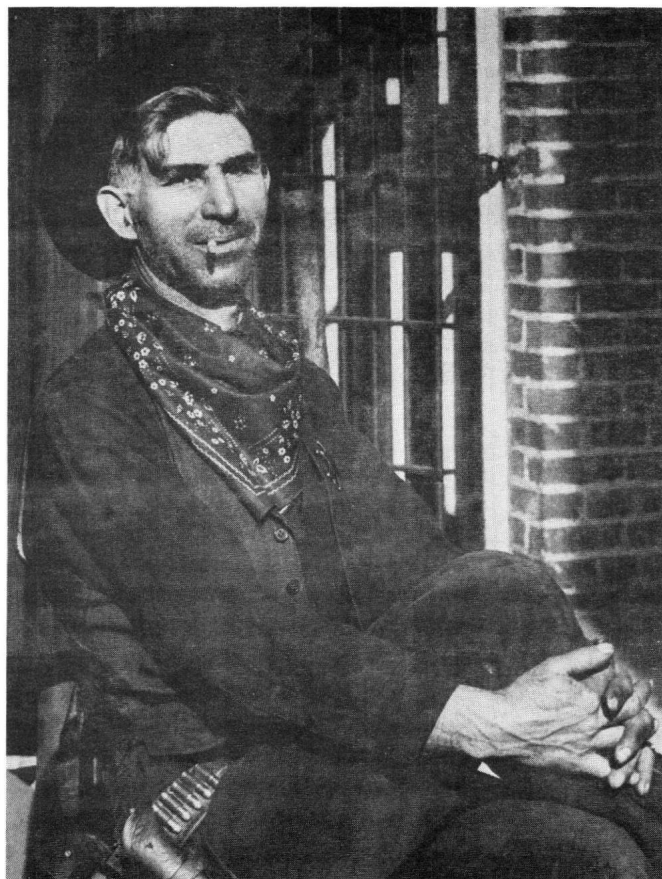


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hotel business. In addition to serving meals and catering to travelers, they turned out pies which they sold, for \$1 each, to the miners.

On July 15, 1856, William Zwinge, the first of Joseph's and Elizabeth's 11 children was born. He missed by only a half-hour, being the first white child born in San Andreas. But, he was the first child to be baptized in St. Andrews Catholic Church.

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Calaveras County Sheriff Joe Zwinge
Calaveras County Archives



Family of Gold Rush Emigrant Joseph Zwinge. (Back row, L to R) Theodore, Elizabeth, John, Mary and Joseph Zwinge, Jr. (Middle row) Henry, Edward, Elizabeth Evers Zwinge, widow of the elder Joseph Zwinge; and Matthew Zwinge. (Front Row) Katherine, Teresa and William Zwinge, father of Sheriff Joe Zwinge. Theodore, John and Joseph married daughters of the pioneer Filippini family and Katherine Zwinge married Dave Filippini, father of Charles Filippini, historical society member and present-day resident of San Andreas.

Charles Filippini Family Album

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When the second child, John, was born, the restaurant was sold. The deed to the property contained the clause, "included in this sale is the silverware and the pigs in the pen out in back."

The Zwinges then moved to their Murray Creek property where their family of seven boys and four girls were raised.

After establishing on the Murray Creek homestead, Joseph Zwinge for a time, took up mining and also built a large reservoir on Murray Creek to store water which he planned to sell to downstream miners. But, no sooner had he completed his rock and earth-fill dam than a large dam further upstream on Murray Creek, near Mountain Ranch, suddenly broke. The water and debris which came rushing down washed out Zwinge's newly built dam.

Zwinge then turned to farming, raising fruit and vegetables for the miners, but lack of roads made it necessary to transport the produce on the backs of mules. He later built a road up Murray Creek to his ranch, using black powder and hand tools.

As the Zwinge children reached school age during the early 1860s, the family moved to San Andreas. There the pioneer Zwinge went into the freighting business, using 10-mule teams to haul merchandise and supplies between Stockton and Calaveras County.

A great tease, the elder Joseph Zwinge was well liked, but he apparently was no great dancer. When the local German population gave a dance and the caller shouted "Swing her on the corner, swing her," Joseph often would make the wrong step, causing considerable hilarity. His friends, upon meeting him later, would laugh and call him "swinger," and before long, "Swinger" became a family nickname.

In 1922 when his grandson, Joseph William Zwinge, first ran for the office of sheriff against several other candidates, he found that more of the county's voters knew him and his family by the name of "Swinger" than they did by his correct name of Zwinge. He remedied that problem by having both names printed on his campaign cards and won the election.

The pioneer Joseph Zwinge and his wife eventually returned to farming on their ranch, but in 1888 he was thrown from a wagon and fatally injured when a team bolted with him. Elizabeth Zwinge died 10 years later.

The oldest son, William, became an expert at operating steam engines and was employed as a hoist engineer at several of Calaveras County's larger mines. He also served as engineer at the McKay Sawmill, (the Clipper Mill) on Love Creek.

William also patented Zwinge's Herb Cough Medicine, which he marketed for several years. His recipe had been

given to his mother by local Miwok Indians. It contained horehound, mullen, brake fern root and coffee berry, all plants native to the Calaveras area.

On March 7, 1880, William Zwinge married Harriet Eltringham of Douglas Flat. Between 1881 and 1900 they had seven children, including Joe, their first child, born in Sheep Ranch, who was destined to serve as Sheriff of Calaveras County for 28 years.

Other children of William and Harriet included John, born in 1882; Walter, 1884; Lula, 1889; Calvin, 1891; Melvin, 1892, and William, born in 1900.

All of the Zwinge family were quite tall. An old newspaper printed in the 1800s, which was found many years later in the Calaveras County Courthouse, contained an article that in a statewide contest the elder Joseph Zwinge had been named the tallest man in California. Runner-up was Harriet Eltringham's father. Naturally, all of William and Harriet Zwinge's children were quite tall. Their daughter, Lula, was five feet, 11 inches tall and their son, Calvin, tallest of their six boys, was six feet, seven inches.

From childhood, when he often saw and admired black hatted Calaveras Sheriff Ben Thorn as he rode proudly through town, young Joe Zwinge wanted someday to be sheriff.

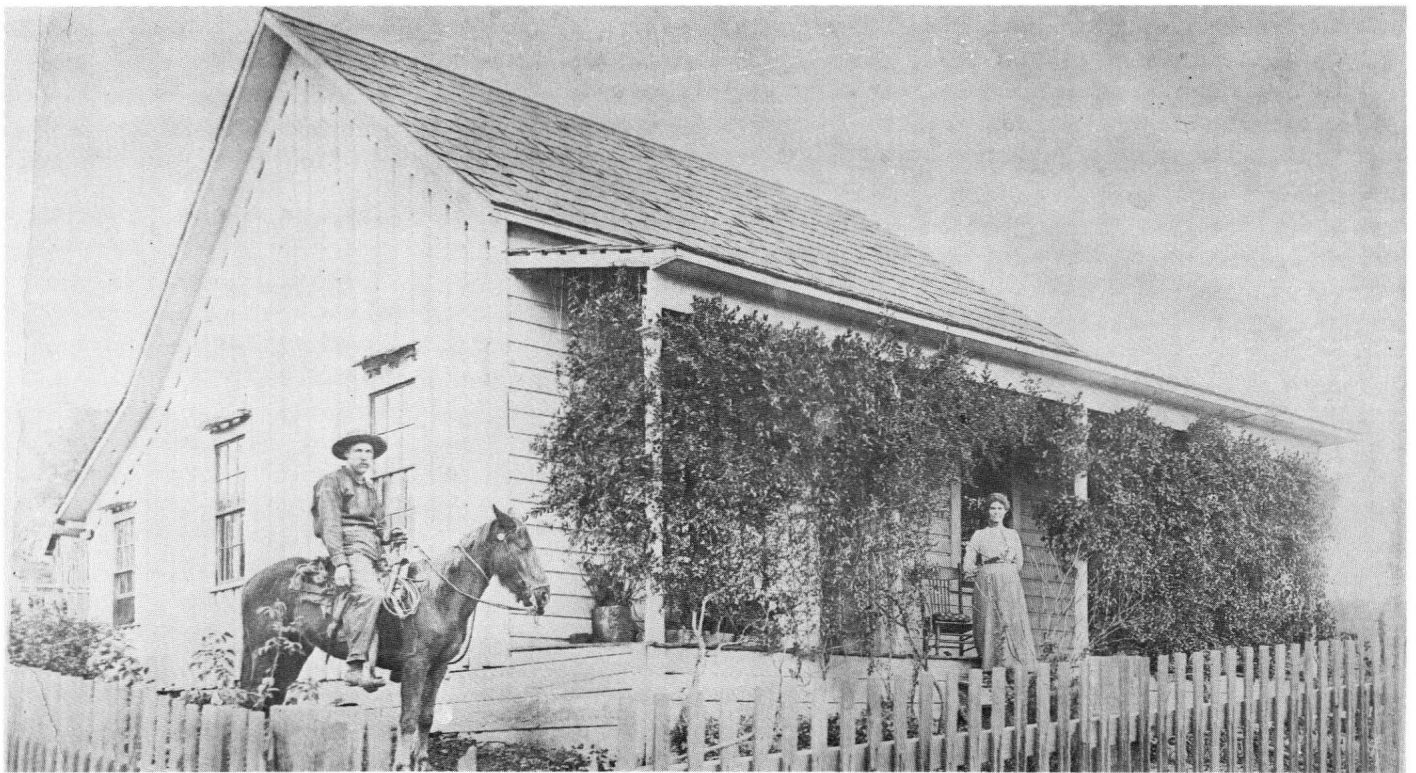
But, upon completing grade school, instead of turning to law enforcement, Joe became apprentice to a San Andreas Blacksmith. He moved on to Porterville, then completed his apprenticeship in Fresno where he also learned the plumbing trade.

For a time, at age 16, Joe and a man named Kirk operated a blacksmith shop in that city. Then for a time, Joe left blacksmithing to try his hand as a dry goods salesman, but 1905 found him back in San Andreas working as a blacksmith for the Utica Company which was building a powerhouse on the Stanislaus River. He held that job for three years.

But, in 1908 a fall from the roof of a building on which he was installing heavy steel braces broke his hip and ended his career in blacksmithing and heavy construction.

While he convalesced, Joe took a job as night watchman at the county courthouse and also helped Charley Waters with his cattle. He did not return to blacksmithing, but instead found employment at various mines where he worked as a hoistman, having learned the basics of the trade from his father.

During a dance in Mountain Ranch Joe met Clara Henrich who had come to Calaveras County from Rich-
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Original Joseph Zwinge home near what is now Roberts Avenue, in San Andreas. In photograph, Uncle Ed and Aunt May Zwinge.

Charles Filippini Family Album

mond with her father, and on November 4, 1914, they were married. They honeymooned at the World's Fair.

In 1915 Joe Zwinge began operating the O'Connell and Wentworth stage line between Valley Springs and Angels — the first automobile stage in Calaveras County.

Zwinge ran the stage line for three years, then moved his young family to Angels Camp where, after a few months employment at a local mine, he opened a garage in 1918. There also, that same year, his third daughter, Lorraine was born.

The Zwinge's first daughter, Velma, had been born in 1916 at her grandmother's home in Mokelumne Hill, and their second daughter, Phyllis, had been born at Fourth Crossing.

In all, Joe and Clara Zwinge had five children. Barbara and Joseph Jr. were born in San Andreas after their father was elected sheriff.

While operating his garage in Angels Camp, Joe got his first taste of law enforcement work when he was elected Constable of Angels Township. And, shortly thereafter, he was appointed Chief of the Angels Camp Volunteer Fire Department. He held both positions until 1923 when he took office as sheriff of Calaveras County.

Urged by friends, Zwinge made the decision in 1922 to enter the race for sheriff against incumbent Don Cosgrove. By the time the June Primary election arrived there were several candidates in the contest, but when the votes were counted Joe Zwinge found himself in a November run-off with Cosgrove.

Zwinge campaigned vigorously but refused to accept any financial contributions from friends.

The November election finally arrived, and when the last ballot was counted, Joe Zwinge was pronounced the winner by a majority of 27 votes.

During the interim between his election and when he took office on January 1, 1923, the new sheriff sold his garage business, bought the home on California Street, in San Andreas, of the defeated sheriff and began an intensive study of law enforcement procedures and state and county criminal law.

The 18th Amendment (prohibition) was in force, Pardee Dam was under construction, mines still were operating at Copperopolis and Melones. The county's population, although small and scattered, had need for good law enforcement.

With a single deputy whom he hired shortly after taking office, and a few scattered volunteer deputies, Joe Zwinge from 1923 until 1950, when he retired, was the law in Calaveras County.

Among the men who served Zwinge as volunteer deputies were Alex Lombardi, of Mokelumne Hill; Bill Hench

and a man named Goey, of Copperopolis and his brother, Melvin Zwinge, who had become Constable of Angels Township.

But, as sheriff, Joe Zwinge often faced danger alone. He did not often wear a holstered gun, but people soon learned that when Zwinge strapped on his old, single action .44 Colt Frontier revolver, he meant business.

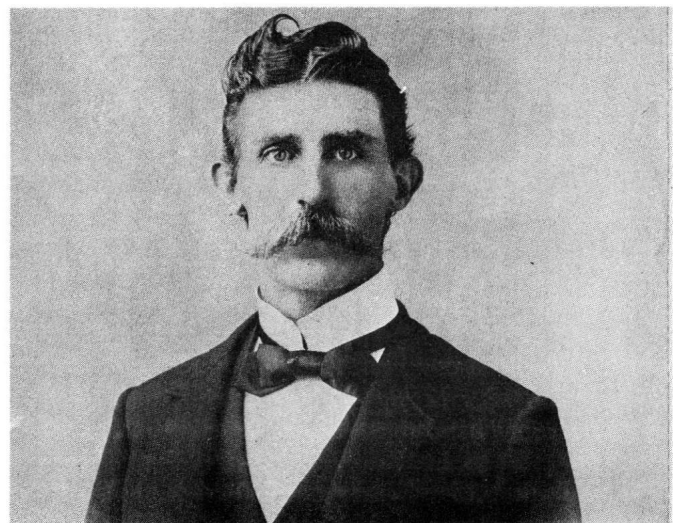
Called to Copperopolis on a July 4th where a drunken miner reportedly was "shooting up the town," Zwinge learned he was holed up in a local rooming house. Moving from room to room the sheriff threw open a door to find himself staring into the muzzle of a cocked revolver in the hands of the miner, who was hiding under the bed. Zwinge made a dive for the gunman whose pistol failed to discharge because its firing pin came down on his hand.

Sheriff Zwinge refused to allow bootlegging in Calaveras County during prohibition year, and he waged a constant war against sellers of illegal liquor and operators of hidden liquor stills.

"We arrested the whiskey makers and wrecked their stills," said the late Howard Collins, who served as Joe Zwinge's deputy for 20 years. "Bear Mountain was a great place for stills and we got a lot of them there," he said.

Collins recalled that about the only operator of a still who didn't end up in jail was a bootlegger in the Mountain Ranch area who had nine kids. "We used to go up there periodically and wreck his still, but we always let him get away. The reason was that the county supervisors didn't want him arrested. They complained that if we arrested him the county would have to support his wife and nine kids while he was in jail."

One Christmas eve a Copperopolis property owner left a



William Zwinge, father of Sheriff Joe Zwinge.

Charles Filippini Family Album

box of cigars in the sheriff's office for Joe Zwinge. Later, the sheriff opened the box to find not only cigars, but 10 \$20 bills.

On Christmas morning it was the sheriff with a search warrant, instead of Santa Claus, who arrived in Copperopolis. He arrested the business owner's bartender, confiscated considerable whiskey and expressed regret that the owner was not there.

Slot machines, common in most counties during the 1930s and 40s, were not tolerated by Zwinge. Old timers recall that on more than one occasion, a cell in the jail housed stacks of confiscated slot machines.

"Dad was a fine man and a terrific sheriff — he never took a dime from anyone — even to finance his election campaigns," said his daughter, Phyllis Comstock, now a resident of Sacramento.

"We had a wonderful family life, and although we were never well off financially, we had enough. Mother was a wonderful cook and homemaker. Because of his job, Dad was gone a lot, but he was good to us kids."

"Because of the sheriff's office, we had the only night phone in town — the board of supervisors wouldn't go for the expense of a radio for the sheriff's department. Consequently, we got lots of emergency calls — messages concerning deaths or accidents — and, if dad wasn't home, Mother would put on her coat, take us kids with her, and deliver the messages," said Mrs. Comstock.

"Like all kids, we liked to use the phone, but when dad and the deputies were out, phone calls for the sheriff's office came to our house. Mayme McConnell was the telephone operator. One of us kids would be jabbering away on the phone and Mayme would break into the conversation with 'You damn kids get off the phone — there's a call for the sheriff on the line here.' "

"During the depression things were tough here, but dad and mother helped a lot of people out with food baskets — we always raised a big garden — and no one ever was turned away from our house without something to eat."

Joe Zwinge liked kids and he hated to put the kids in jail. He personally took over the guardianship of many youngsters rather than see them sent to an institution. For those that had to be held in custody locally, he had a separate building constructed in the old courtyard, which he called the detention ward, so the youngsters could stay there.

He also refused to use two old dungeons in the back corner of the jail yard — they are gone now — in which to house prisoners. Phyllis Comstock recalls that they were built of heavy timbers sunk into the earth, were damp, dark, and so small that prisoners were forced to crouch in



Joe and Clara Zwinge on wedding day.

Phyllis Comstock Album

them. Each had a ball and leg chains and the air in them was foul.

Joe Zwinge's biggest case — the arrest and break-up in 1929 of the notorious Fleagle gang — made national headlines.

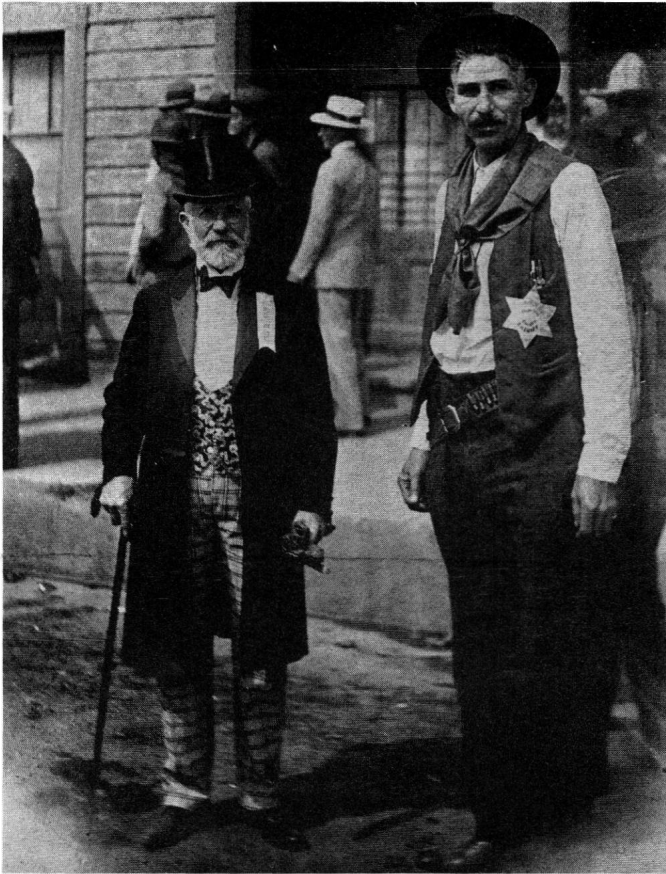
Using their jobs at the Calaveras Cement Plant in San Andreas as a front, Howard "Heavy" Royston and others, committed crimes throughout the west, including an Escalon bank robbery; robbery of the Tracy Post Office; a train robbery in Pinole during which a federal payroll was taken and robbery of a Lamar, Colo., bank in which four persons were murdered.

The sheriff's suspicions concerning a scar from a gunshot wound in the face which Royston tried to pass off as an automobile accident injury, led to his connection with the Colorado bank robbery and slayings. Ultimately, Royston, whom Zwinge arrested in his San Andreas home; one of the Fleagle brothers and a third member of the gang were hanged for the Colorado murders. A fourth member of the gang died in a shoot-out with police in Pocatello, Idaho.

Joe and Clara Zwinge watched their youngsters grow up in their California Street home and become young adults as he continued to serve as sheriff. It was a good life.

But there were dark moments, too.

The sadness and awful emptiness when the family
Please see **Zwinge**, pg. 46



Sheriff Joe Zwinge with dignitary at Frog Jump in Angels Camp, circa 1930. Oversized badge was presented to sheriff as a joke. *Phyllis Comstock Album*

Zwinge, cont. from pg. 45

learned that young Joe, 20, had died in a plane crash in England, early in world War II.

And it was bleak news for Joe Zwinge and his family when he learned, during the late 1940s that the illness he was suffering had been diagnosed as cancer. In 1948, the sheriff underwent major surgery, but his condition did not greatly improve.

He continued on as sheriff, serving out his seventh term, but chose in 1950 to retire rather than to seek reelection.

He died in a Stockton Hospital on May 27, 1956, leaving his wife and daughters, Velma, Phyllis, Lorraine and Barbara; his sister, Lula Reinking, and his brother, Melvin.

Clara Zwinge passed way in 1976.

Said Sheriff James of San Joaquin County in a letter to Joe Zwinge, wishing him a speedy recovery shortly after he had announced his retirement, "You're the only man I ever met who wore his heart over his badge."

FLEAGLE GANG LEFT A BLOODY TRAIL

Mid-June, 1929, morning heat already was bearing down on the sunny side of North Main Street, in San Andreas, as Sheriff Joe Zwinge walked into McNaughton's barber shop, across from the county courthouse.

A customer, whom the barber was preparing to shave, reclined in the barber's chair, his face swathed with a steaming, wet towel.

"Who you roasting under that thing," asked the sheriff, nodding toward the reclining man.

Then casually, with no intent of offending either the barber or his customer, Zwinge, before turning to seat himself, lifted a corner of the towel. Staring up at him was the face of Howard "Heavy" Royston, a tram engineer at the Calaveras Cement Plant.

"Oh, hullo, Heavy," said the sheriff as he quickly dropped the towel back in place.

After a few moments of random conversation Zwinge arose and left. The barber removed the towel and began Royston's shave.

As for the sheriff, he had glimpsed Royston's face for only an instant, but that quick glance raised questions in his mind that would not go away.

Royston, 34, had arrived in Calaveras County in 1925, had been hired as an engineer at the cement plant, and later married a teacher, Mary Keyes, of Mountain Ranch. They now had a nine-month-old daughter and lived in a house on North Main Street, near the San Andreas Creek Bridge. Royston's mother lived with them.

Although Royston worked at the cement plant, he and his locomotive brakeman, George John Abshier, 32, took periodic leaves of absence. In May, 1928, Royston and Abshier took off for a few days, but did not immediately return.

Word came back that Royston had been hurt in an automobile accident and Abshier had found another job.

When, after a considerable time Royston did come home, he wore a bandage over the side of his face to cover the wound he said he received in the accident.

But, what Sheriff Zwinge had seen that June morning when he lifted the towel off Royston's face, he was sure was not a cut received in an auto accident.

"That is a gunshot wound," he quietly told his wife that evening. "I could see powder burns around the healed area. This bears further investigation."

Zwinge contacted Clarence Morrill, director of the State Department of Criminal Investigation and Identification, and a probe of Royston's activities got underway.

Zwinge knew facts about Royston that others in Cal-

Sheriff in Sherlock Holmes Role



SHERIFFS PLAYED SHERLOCK HOLMES ROLE

Above sketches depict high spots in solution of \$238,000 bank robbery and murder of four men in Lamar, Colo. Ralph Fleagle was arrested in Illinois after his and Howard Royston's bloody fingerprints were found on murder victim's car. Royston, a Calaveras Cement Plant employee, was arrested in San Andreas. Jake Fleagle escaped and is now sought throughout the U.S.

(Sketches and photos from Aug. 17, 1929, Stockton Record)

averas County did not. He knew Royston had been arrested in Richmond for theft of \$1,000 worth of cigarettes and tobacco from a freight car, and in Sacramento in 1922 for grand larceny. He had been acquitted on both counts.

Royston's previous arrests made it easy for Zwinge and Morrill to obtain his fingerprints without arousing his suspicion. At the same time, they began checking dates of his and Abshier's absences from the cement plant.

The dates of those absences were checked against the dates of major crimes in this and other western states.

It was a long and frustrating process for Sheriff Zwinge, but he refused to give up.

Then, in August after months of fruitless letter writing and investigation, the break came.

On May 23, 1928, while Royston and Abshier were on one of their periodic leaves, four men armed with rifles and revolvers had robbed the First National Bank of Lamar, Colo. The gunmen took \$238,000 in cash and securities and left a bloody shambles in their wake. But they did not get off Scott free.

As the four entered the bank and announced they were conducting a holdup, bank president A.N. Parrish instead of raising his hands, pulled a revolver from a desk drawer and began firing.

Parrish died under a hail of bullets from the bandits' guns. His son, John, was shot and died a few hours later.

But, one of the banker's shots had not missed. A bullet from his pistol hit one of the robbers in the jaw.

The bandits fled, but not before they took the bank's money and securities. They also abducted a bank messenger and bank teller Everett A. Kessinger as hostages.

The messenger, E. A. Lundgren, was released unharmed a few miles from Lamar, but Kessinger was killed by the gunmen. His body was found three weeks later in Kansas.

The wounded member of the gang was badly in need of medical treatment and in Dighton, Kans., one of the gunmen went to the home of Dr. W. W. Wininger. At gunpoint, the doctor was forced to drive to an abandoned ranch near Oakley where he was held for nearly two weeks while he treated the wounded man.

When the gunman had recovered enough to travel, Dr. Wininger was shot to death and his automobile with his body in it, was pushed down a hill into a gully.

The doctor's car was found, and Sheriff Joe Zwinge was notified early in August that the fingerprints of Howard Royston and Ralph Fleagle, a known gunman and bank robbery suspect, were found on the doctor's automobile.

Even as notification of Royston's apparent involvement in the Lamar bank robbery and death of the doctor reached Sheriff Zwinge, Ralph Fleagle was arrested in Kankakee, Ill., and was immediately charged with murder and robbery. His brother, Jake, also sought as a suspect in the robbery and murders, escaped arrest by minutes in Peoria, Ill.

Sheriff L.E. Alderman of Prowers County, Colorado, Please see **GANG**, pg. 48

PLEAD GUILTY



Herbert L. "Heavy" Royston (top) and George J. Abshier.



Sheriff Joe Zwinge, (left) with undersheriff H. H. Zierdt and state investigator Owen Kessell, (right) closed the net around the Fleagle gang.

GANG, cont. from pg. 48

in which the town of Lamar is located, left immediately for Illinois to take custody of Ralph Fleagle. And, in doing so he set a precedent by being the first law enforcement officer in the nation to transport a prisoner by airplane.

Fleagle, by the time he arrived in Colorado, was ready and willing to talk in an attempt to save himself from the gallows. He admitted that he and his brother, Jake, had been involved in numerous robberies. He also implicated himself, his brother, Royston and Abshier in the robbery of a Southern Pacific Company train at Bay Point, near Pinole, California, in which a federal payroll was taken and in the robbery of a post office in Tracy.

He gave his questioners information in detail about the Lamar bank robbery, and blamed the shooting of the bank personnel and Dr. Winger on Royston, Abshier and his brother, Jake.

In return for his confession, Colorado authorities, including the Prowers County district attorney, reportedly told Ralph Fleagle they would not ask for the death penalty be invoked against him. The alleged agreement brought forth criticism in Lamar and other parts of Colorado, as well as in California.

With Fleagle's confession and the finding of Royston's fingerprint on the dead doctor's car, Royston's and Abshier's Jekyll and Hyde existence came to an end on the afternoon of August 16, 1929.

Armed with a murder warrant issued in Colorado, Sheriff Joe Zwinge, accompanied by state investigators, his undersheriff and at least one Colorado police officer, went at mid-afternoon to the Royston home on Main Street.

Howard Royston, who was once again employed at the cement plant, worked nights and was asleep on a cot in the basement of his home because it was cool there.

At the front door the sheriff and his delegation of peace officers was met by Royston's mother, Hannah, who ap-

parently aware of her son's involvement in crime, told them he was not home.

The sheriff pushed past her and walked down the stairs to the basement where he awakened Royston and placed him under arrest. Royston was unarmed and offered no resistance, however, a search of the premises revealed a loaded revolver under the mattress of his upstairs bedroom.

That same afternoon in Grand Junction, Colo., George John Abshier, (aka Messick) who had been under observation for several days, was taken into custody and charged with the Lamar slayings and bank robbery.

Following Royston's arrest, Sheriff Zwinge went into his office to telephone the information to Colorado authorities. When he completed the phone call he found Royston shackled hand and foot, awaiting transport to Sacramento where he was to be held, pending extradition proceedings.

"What the Hell? — Get that stuff off of him," ordered the sheriff, as he pointed to the handcuffs and leg-irons.

By the time they arrived in Sacramento Sheriff Zwinge had Royston's full confession.

Royston admitted firing five shots at bank president A. N. Parrish after the banker shot him in the face. He added that all four members of the gang were firing during the robbery.

He told Zwinge that of the \$238,000 taken, \$193,000 was in bonds and securities which later were burned. His share of the loot, he told the sheriff, amounted to less than \$1,000 and he spent most of that on doctor bills in St. Paul, Minn., where he fled after Winger was killed.

Royston said the Fleagles and Abshier essentially abandoned him after he was wounded.

George Abshier was the first of the trio of accused men to face trial, and on October 11, 1929, in a Lamar courtroom, he was found guilty of murder and bank robbery and sentenced to death.

On October 16, exactly two months after he was arrested in his San Andreas home, Howard "Heavy" Royston, also was sentenced to hang for the Lamar murders and bank robbery.

Then, on October 26, despite assurances that because of turning state's evidence he would not hang, a jury in the same Lamar courtroom found Ralph Fleagle guilty of murder in the first degree and sentenced him to death.

All three men, within months, died on the gallows for their crimes.

Jake Fleagle, a few months later, was cornered and shot to death by police when he resisted arrest in Pocatello, Idaho.

CALAVERAS COUNTY MUSEUM NOW OPEN EVERY DAY

The Calaveras County Museum, housed in the 132-year-old county courthouse on historic Main Street, in San Andreas, now is open to the public seven days a week.

The museum hours are from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, with an elevator providing easy access to the second floor of the old courthouse and IOOF Hall in which the museum is located.

Through an agreement with the County Board of Supervisors, the Calaveras County Historical Society has begun operating the museum with its own staff, assisted by members of our society who serve as volunteer docents.

This new arrangement comes on the heels of an extensive renovation and refurbishing of the museum area, financed through a \$70,000 grant coupled with local county funds.

Our society members with the cooperation of the Calaveras County Heritage Council, now are planning expansion of the museum exhibits and displays of artifacts dating back to the Gold Rush days.

The main floor of the courthouse contains the historical society's business office and the county archives.

The business office, which is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., is administered by Executive Office Director Willard Fuller, a historian and retired mining engineer.

County Archivist Lorraine Kennedy, who also is past-president of our historical society, donates her services, and is in her office from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday and Friday of each week, and also by appointment.

Calaveras County residents are lucky in that their county's archives contains one of the most complete sets of records, local newspapers, diaries, articles and historical data on early-day people, families and events, of any county in Northern or Central California. The historical society itself, also has an extensive collection of early day photographs.

And, thanks largely to the work of Mrs. Kennedy, this vast store of information has been meticulously indexed and filed for quick and easy reference. The archives are open to the public as well as to this county's residents, and requests for information and research come here regularly from throughout the nation.

Also open for viewing in the old courthouse complex is the old Calaveras County Jail which held such notorious outlaws as stage-coach bandit "Black Bart," and countless other desperados who robbed and killed during the hectic gold mining days. Within the rustic walled courtyard that surrounds the old jail at least three murderers went to the gallows during the latter part of the 19th century. Their bodies still lie within the courtyard in unmarked graves.

STUDENTS' HISTORY ESSAY WINNERS RECEIVE AWARDS

The winners of our society's student history essay contest which was renewed this year after a lapse of several years, were honored at our April 28 dinner in the Metropolitan.

From a field of more than 40 entries, ten young essay writers were selected for prizes that ranged from \$200 for first prize to \$10 for honorable mention.

The students competed on three combined grade levels that included Fifth and Sixth Grades, Seventh and Eighth and Ninth through Twelfth Grades (high school).

The essays, which could be on any historical subject or event of the author's choosing which involved Calaveras County or its people, were judged 60 percent on originality and historical content, 20 percent on composition and 20 percent on organization and neatness.

First prize and \$200 in the high school category went to Ninth Grader Toney Powers, of Bret Harte High School, whose essay was titled "The McCarty Family of Copperopolis."

Second place and \$120 went to Calaveras High School sophomore Dan Stoddard who wrote on the "Miwok Indians of Calaveras." Jamie Canepa, a Bret Harte ninth grader, was third place winner in the high school competition with an essay titled "The Canepas." He received \$40.

Honorable mention went to an essay on "Mines and Miners of Angels Camp," written by Bret Harte 10th grader Tim White, who received \$10.

In the Seventh-Eighth Grade competition, first place and \$100 went to Copperopolis eighth grader J.R. St. Peter for his essay titled "The Federal Truck."

Bruce Burnett, a seventh grader at Toyon Middle School, won second place and \$50 for his "History of Mountain Ranch."

Toyon eighth graders Jesse Hooton and her best friend, Maria Montasano, each won \$25 by tying for third place in the Seventh-Eighth Grade contest. Jesse's essay was titled "The Hotel Leger And Its Owners," and Maria's was "A Tale of the Bandito Joaquin Murieta."

Honorable mention and \$10 went to Toyon eighth grader Virginia Ringuette, for her essay titled "Mountain Ranch Heritage."

Melissa Newby, a sixth grader at Valley Springs Elementary School, won \$100 and first place in the Fifth-Sixth Grade competition with her essay on the history of Jenny Lind.

The winners, who with their families were guests at our dinner meeting, read their essays to the audience of more than 100 people.

Please see **Essays**, pg. 50

THE McCARTY FAMILY OF COPPEROPOLIS

By
Toney Powers
Ninth Grade, Bret Harte High School

Thomas and Agnes McCarty homesteaded land on Log Cabin Creek, on the site of what is now Copperopolis. Mrs. McCarty's two brothers also came to Copper and established the Dean Ranch, on the northeast side of Salt Springs.

The McCartys raised a family of nine children. They included Ransome, William, Edward, Charles, George, Jackson, Deborah, Agnes and Caroline. These nine children and their parents lived in a small log cabin while Thomas McCarty operated a store and trading post where miners came to buy food and supplies. Thomas also delivered supplies to mines and mining camps that included the "If I Can," South Shaft and the Union Mines.

In 1860, while Thomas was making a delivery, one of his wagon wheels became stuck in a mud-hole. While freeing it, he found a small amount of copper ore.

William Reed also discovered copper at about the same time, so he and McCarty decided to form a partnership. In 1862 they sold most of their interest in the Union Mine and built a turnpike from Copperopolis to the McCarty Ranch, and on through Telegraph City.

Thomas McCarty remained on his Log Cabin Ranch for the rest of his life, raising horses, cattle and sheep. After his death his sons, Ransome and Jackson, carried on the ranching operation.

The two McCarty boys eventually ended their partnership, split the livestock, and each of them bought their own ranch.

Jackson Dean McCarty bought the Albert Ranch in Salt Spring Valley in 1901. Jackson also purchased the original Log Cabin Ranch from his brothers and sisters.

In 1902, Jackson Dean married Helen Hunt and their children were Cecil, Albert, Helen, Jackson (little Jack), Taft, Lucille, Agnes, Helen, Thomas, Dean and Ella.

Little Jack McCarty drove a truck, carrying fence posts and fence wire to local ranchers. He married Venus Shum and they had eight children. They were Jacklyn, Donna Rae, J.T., Vennie Mae, Ronnie, Pattie, Robbi and Dick.



Toney Powers

Little Jack died in 1973 and his wife, Venus, died in 1987.

The McCartys who still live in Copperopolis are Ella McCarty Hiatt; Ronnie, his wife, Pat and their daughters, Ronda and Stacy, and Dick and his four children, Rick, Michele, Krissy and Tara.

Ronnie still runs cattle on the McCarty Ranch near Salt Springs. Dick now owns the Copper Inn, in Copperopolis.

The McCartys still are active and supportive of Copperopolis community affairs.

In researching this report, I used Volume XV, No. II, of Las Calaveras and also spoke to Dick, Ronnie, Claire McCarty and Charles "Sonny" Stone.

THE FEDERAL TRUCK

By
J.R. St.Peter
Eighth Grade, Copperopolis Elementary

The Federal Truck was used from 1915 to 1918 to carry the U.S. Mail, passengers and freight between Columbia and Sonora.

The truck was purchased in 1915 by George M. Trask, of Columbia. Before buying the truck, Mr. Trask had used four horses (and sometimes six) to pull a Concord Stagecoach.

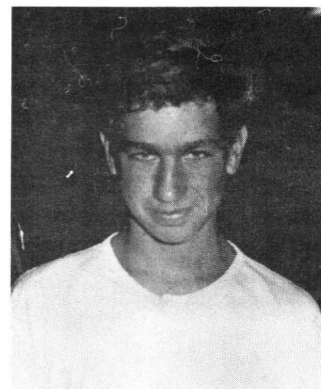
In the early days, from the 1880s until the Sierra Railroad reached Sonora, the mail from Columbia and Sonora was brought by train to Milton, then was taken by horse drawn stages through Copperopolis and along O'Byrnes Ferry Road.

The stagecoaches also carried Wells-Fargo strong boxes that contained money and gold, and they were often stopped by bandits, usually between Copperopolis and O'Byrnes Ferry, said Mr. Trask.

Mr. Trask met the stage from Milton at Mt. Brow, on the Sonora highway and transferred mail, passengers and the Wells-Fargo box to his 17-passenger stagecoach and delivered them to Columbia.

The Milton stage then went on to Sonora. By 1888, Trask was delivering mail directly between Sonora and Columbia, a four-mile trip that took him about 50 minutes, and sometimes longer, when there was snow or the dirt road was flooded and muddy.

By 1915 cars and trucks were coming into general use



J.R. St.Peter

and George Trask decided to buy the Federal truck for his mail run.

The "Federal" was a chain link drive that often was called a worm drive. The truck had solid tires and wooden spoke wheels with a canvas top and side curtains for bad weather and was capable of speeds up to 15 miles per hour.

The front seat provided space for the driver and one passenger and three passenger seats fitted the full width of the truck body and were covered with a full-length cushion, canvas covered and stuffed with straw or excelsior.

Head lamps were lighted by carbide and the solid rubber tires made the truck very rough riding, especially on the rough, dirt roads of those times.

The J.D. McCarty family of Salt Springs Valley, near the town of Copperopolis, bought the Federal truck in 1920 from Mr. Trask.

Mr. McCarty had a sheep range in the U.S. Forest on Sonora Pass and needed the truck to haul supplies to the headquarters for his sheep camps near Dardanelle. Mr. McCarty was about 60 years old and had learned to drive his Model T Ford but he didn't learn to drive the Federal truck.

Mr. Trask taught McCarty's son, Jackson, to drive the truck so they could bring it home to Salt Spring Valley. Jackson was McCarty's oldest son, but he was only eleven years old. His father sat beside him and helped with the gears and the brakes, as the boy could hardly reach those pedals. The gas lever was under the steering wheel, as it was on most cars made in those days.

The truck was used by the McCarty family to and from Sonora Pass for many years and was always driven by "Little Jack," as he was called. A lot of times on the return trip home down the steep grades from Dardanelle they would bring home a load of cedar posts to be used on the home ranch for fence building. This was a very dangerous trip and there were some frightening experiences, like the time when the brakes gave out. They were lucky to find a place at the bottom of the hill where they could coast to a stop, and no one was hurt.

When they were carrying freight the seats were removed to make more room for hauling. The truck was also used to haul loads of wool from the McCarty sheep ranch to the train at Milton. The wool was put into large sacks of about 200 pounds each.

Mr. McCarty had a family of eight children and he liked to take his children and friends on picnics around Salt Spring Valley because he could haul about six people to each seat. He also took his family to their summer camp at the Dardanelle and Douglas Station every summer, in the Federal truck.

Later, the other three McCarty sons grew up and learned to drive the Federal truck. It was used this way until the late 1920s or early 1930s.

The Federal truck is now used just for parades, but it still belongs to the J.D. McCarty family. The truck is kept in Ron McCarty's Garage in Copperopolis.

JENNY LIND

By

Melissa Newby

Sixth Grade, Valley Springs Elementary

Jenny Lind is a very special place to my family and me. That is why I have chosen it as my topic.

Before I talk about my family's connection with Jenny Lind history, I'd like to tell you a little background on Jenny Lind.

Jenny Lind, founded in 1849, was first called Dry Diggins' because of the lack of water to wash its gold bearing gravel.

Later, it was renamed Jenny Lind.

Why did they rename the town?

Well, a famous lady named Jenny Lind was coming to sing to the townspeople.

She was known to make a fortune in gold each night she sang. She sang on a stump and the people really loved her and changed the name of the town to "Jenny Lind," in honor of her.

Jenny Lind is a small little town in the Mother Lode. In her day she was as prosperous as any of her neighboring boom towns.

It is a historic mining town, located on the Calaveras River between Bellota and Milton. The streams were lined with gold and people still pan gold there today. You can still see the scars from the dredges which mined there following the gold rush days.

The old livery stable that was built there is special to me. A man named Randy Sparks has bought that place and has restored it to its original beauty. He put my grandfather Newby's name on the top.

The sign reads: "D.E. Newby," and I know my grandfather would have loved it. In its day, it sheltered many a string of pack mules.

There used to be a store in Jenny Lind. There is nothing left of the building now.

I remember my grandpa telling us about the store. He owned the land the store was on. When he sold the land

Please see **Jenny Lind**, pg. 52



Melissa Newby

Jenny Lind, cont. from pg. 51

they tore down the old store buildings.

The Odd Fellows Hall was built in 1878. It seems to be the only one that is beautifully preserved and kept. My Grandfather Newby still is a member and goes there all the time.

I lived in Jenny Lind with my Grandmother Newby for a couple of months. She still lives up on the hill in Jenny Lind. You can look down on the whole town from her house. My Dad was raised on that hill. His roots are there.

My Grandfather Newby and my uncle are buried in Jenny Lind in the IOOF Cemetery and I'm glad my family roots are still there.

I only wish they could have restored all the old important buildings in Jenny Lind so that people could enjoy the old mining town as it once was.

Jenny Lind is quite a little town with a big history.

Calaveras County Historical Society

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The Calaveras County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Grange Hall in San Andreas — except for dinner meetings which are held each quarter at different places in the county.

The Society's office is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 to 5:00. The telephone number is (209) 754-1058. Visitors are welcome.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome these new members to the society:

- Mrs. Bernice Bishop, Altaville.
- E. R. Bobrow, Jr., Altaville.
- Paul Bosse, Jackson.
- John L. Canepa, Acampo.
- Allin G. Copp, Stockton.
- Kathey & Dan Dietrich, Mountain Ranch.
- Pat Feeley, San Andreas.
- Lillie Nichols Gruber, Linden.
- Shirley & Jerry Hodnefield, Saratoga.
- Mr. & Mrs. Art Hough, Valley Springs.
- Kenneth & Terri Jarrett, Linden.
- Bryce & Elaine Jasper, San Andreas.
- John R. Kirk, West Point.
- Nadine & Eugene Looper, Linden.
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- Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Stoneking, Valley Springs.
- Les & Mary Anne Strojan, Farmington.
- Tom & Mary Taylor, Mokelumne Hill.
- Howard Tower, Copperopolis.
- Helen Riley Warne, Altaville.

IN MEMORIAM

- Mrs. Frances E. Bishop, Arnold. April 12, 1988
- Mrs. Eva Cuneo, Calaveritas. May 12, 1988
- Doris Treat Daley, Corona Del Mar. May 11, 1988
- Ellis "Al" Gibbens, San Andreas. April, 19, 1988
- Mrs. Josephine Hymes, Napa. June 3, 1988
- Rose Wiebe, Lakeview, Ore. June 8, 1988

DINNER MEETING JULY 28

New officers will be installed and our society's annual architectural awards will be presented at its July 28 dinner meeting in the Metropolitan Dinner Theater, in San Andreas.

The dinner will start at 6:30 p.m., followed by the installation of officers and award presentations.

The architectural awards committee is chaired by Roberta Kenyon, of Mountain Ranch. Serving with her is her husband, Ozzie; George K. "Dutch" and Lucy Schwoerer, of Valley Springs; Jack and Lorrayne Kennedy, of San Andreas; Shirley Huberty and Winnie Alexander, both of Mountain Ranch.