

## THE SCHNEIDERS OF BAVARIA

*by Michael B. Arkin and Franklin T. Laskin*

The Schneiders of Bavaria were among the common folk of that country who failed to share in Prussia's expansionist ambitions. The state's *Realpolitik* was of considerably less concern than finding food, clothing, and shelter, and providing a decent future for their children. Nor were they willing to submit to the conscription of their male family members for employment in foreign wards. It was this general discontent that spawned a major 19th-century tide of immigration to the New World.

In 1853, when the army recruiters for Maximilian II arrived to claim Ludwig Schneider's sons, he packed up the entire family and fled to America.

At that time of the family's entry through New York's Ellis Island, the Schneider name, like the names of so many arriving middle European immigrants, was "Anglicized" by the immigration service to a simple "Snyder." And so they would henceforth be known.

Ludwig's sons, Peter, acquired 300 acres of land bordering the town of Murphys where he successfully engaged in placer mining. He next began the production of fruit, wine, distilled spirits, and the raising of cattle. Peter and his wife also reared nine children, six of whom would one day enter the field of law: John, Jacob, Charles, William, George, and Louisa. John, Charles

and George Snyder were destined to figure prominently in the county's legal affairs, while the others gravitated to the counties north and west of Calaveras.

John Snyder became a successful practitioner, both privately and through his public service as county prosecutor. During his terms as district attorney his brothers Jacob and Charles served as deputies in the office.

On the occasion of John Snyder's death, in January of 1899, the Calaveras County Bar Association convened to honor his memory. Significantly, this ceremony marked the first time in the county's history that the local bar referred to itself as an "association." However, it was not until 1909 that the bar's formal organization was documented in writing.

On this special occasion, Frank J. Solinsky presented a resolution on behalf of the association; and Judge Victor Gottschalk delivered some remarks from the bench. The lawyer Solinsky delivered the following eulogy:

**Again this little circle of friends and co-workers, constituting the Calaveras Bar Association, has been visited by the grim reaper, death, and our associate, John J. Snyder, has been removed from the busy scenes of life.**

...

...when on the morning of January 18, 1899, the tolling bell sent forth the sad tidings that John Snyder had breathed his last, there was laid upon every heart in this community a sorrow that even time will not remove.

...

...our records should be made to perpetuate the memory of this young man, so that in future years others who may be occupying our places, may know by written evidence as well as by traditions that will for years live in this land, something of the character and worth of our departed friend.

...

During the past eight years he has been present in this courtroom at every session... even now we feel that our friend, John Snyder, should be sitting here in our midst assisting this Court in the performance of its duties.

...

He was an honest and conscientious man...unselfish...kind and generous...a man of ability and courage...a staunch, fearless and successful advocate in court...

...

...a man of sterling character...faithful to his every trust...who gained our highest respect and trust...



John Snyder, the young attorney who garnered much praise at his early passing, is pictured here with his wife Elizabeth "Sid" O'Connell Snyder. They are standing in front of their grand home in San Andreas, circa 1895. Today the house is known as The Robin's Nest.

Judge Gottschalk added:

I had come to know our deceased brother and to appreciate his qualities of head and heart. The longer I knew him, the more I became impressed with his honesty of purpose and the zeal which he brought to the discharge of his official duties...[as district attorney].

...

...he was honest, upright and kind...His heart knew no guile.

...

Let us hope that he will be judged in the spirit by which his own actions were guided through life.

John Snyder, who died two months before his 35th birthday, had accomplished much in a short lifetime. In the course of nine years he had married (Elizabeth O'Connell in 1895), and started a family, established a thriving law practice, and invested the fruits thereof in the "Snyder Mansion," an ornately constructed Queen Anne style Victorian on St. Charles Street, in San Andreas (as of this [that] writing the Robin's Nest Bed and Breakfast Inn). In addition, he had served the citizens with great zeal and devotion in his role of County prosecutor.

## Death of a County Lawman

Brothers Jacob and Charles learned well their legal skills under the tutelage provided by their mentor, John. It was the younger brother, Jacob, who teamed with Frank Solinsky in the prosecution of Jules [Julius] Martinez for the murder of Deputy Sheriff James Casey.

The case of People v. Martinez is remembered, not only for the ethical conflicts it created among the principals involved, but also for testing the conscience of an entire community.

Martinez was a mild-mannered local laborer who became a quarrelsome, obnoxious drunk when in his cups. On a hot, humid Sunday afternoon, July 26, 1903, he had been drinking in Frank Barton's saloon on North Main Street, San Andreas, when his "Mr. Hyde" persona emerged and he began harassing the other patrons.

Deputy Casey happened to be present in the saloon. He initially tried to warn Martinez, and when these warnings had no effect he was obliged to take the offender into custody.

The constable escorted his charge down Main Street and placed him in a holding cell for transient drunks at the county jail. Casey was about to leave the drunk tank—or “hole,” as it was commonly known—when he remembered to turn back to search his prisoner. Deputy Sheriff A. G. Thorn, on duty as jailer that afternoon, had already preceded Casey out of the hole when he was startled by two gunshots followed by a smothered outcry.

He rushed back to the holding cell just as Martinez emerged with a pistol in hand. The prisoner fired twice at Thorn, missing both times, and was then disarmed by the deputy. But in the ensuing struggle he managed to break free and escape through the open gate of the jail yard. Deputy Thorn, upon entering the hole, found Casey sprawled face down on the floor, fatally wounded.

Unable to revive his partner, he ran a short distance to the Courthouse Saloon—(the premises, ironically, being operated by the victim’s father)—and sounded an alarm. Word spread quickly through the town and posses were formed: one, a ragtag group of angry citizens; the other, official, convened by Sheriff George Graves.

The second group reached Martinez first, where he had been pulled out of a nearby residence. They found one of Casey’s brothers beating the escapee with a pistol butt, while two other brothers—among a number of assailants—were hoping to join the fray. Deputy D. A. Charles Snyder, a sheriff’s posse leader, managed to rescue Martinez in the face of threats against his own life. And it was Snyder who, along with a brave gentleman name Will Nuner, thwarted a clamorous lynch mob surrounding the jail later that afternoon.



**Judge Victor Gottschalk, pictured in 1882, who held high regard for John Snyder’s legal work.**

Justice court Judge P. H. Kean presided over a coroner’s jury, the next day, which found the suspect to have “willfully, unlawfully, feloniously and with malice...(murdered) James Casey, a human being.” This was a particularly poignant duty for Judge Kean, and a doubly-tragic coincidence: Deputy Casey had been his own son-in-law, the former husband of Kean’s recently deceased daughter. If this were a modern coroner’s jury, it is clear that the presiding magistrate would have had to recuse himself.

On August 26, precisely one month after the murder, superior court Judge Arthur McSorley appointed Ira Hill

Reed to defend Martinez. But the former county judge declined the appointment, citing poor health, the “notoriety” and “bias” engendered by the case, and the weight of legal forces arrayed against him. Obviously displeased, Judge McSorley found Reed in contempt and sentenced him to serve five days in the county jail. Local attorney C. R. Hawley was then appointed in his place.

Before the trial opened in late September, however, Arthur McSorley recused himself, “feeling too close to the case,” and Amador County Superior Judge R. C. Rust was brought in to preside. The People were represented by Frank Solinsky and Deputy District Attorney Jacob Snyder, both of whom gave opening statements. A total of 12 witnesses testified for the prosecution. Defense counsel Hawley struggled valiantly in a lost cause and against a predictable outcome (as well as overwhelming firepower on the other side). Called to the witness stand on Martinez’s behalf were his mother, aunt, sisters, some friends, employers, and at least one saloon keeper. None of this testimony would avail.



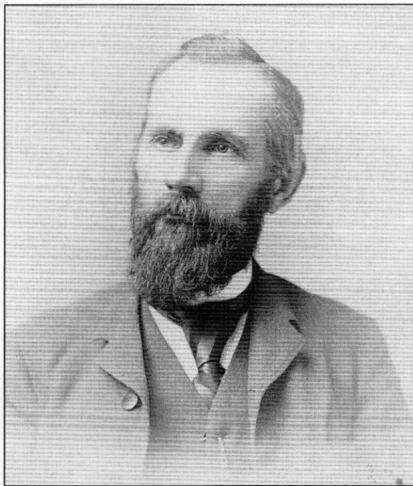
**Deputy Sheriff Jim Casey in 1899. Only 31 years old and already a widower, the young deputy met a violent death on a jail cell floor in 1903.**

After brief deliberations, on October 1, the jury found [the] defendant “guilty of murder in the first degree.” A motion for a new trial was denied, and, six days later, Judge Rust sentenced Martinez “to be delivered to the warden of San Quentin State Prison to be hanged by the neck until...dead...”

On October 11, 1903, Julius Martinez died on gallows erected in the San Quentin prison yard. His hanging was witnessed by five friends previously chosen by the condemned man, by two brothers of the fallen deputy, and by a number of state officials and corrections personnel, including U. S. Webb, the California attorney general.

Just two and one-half months earlier, the body of James Casey, thirty-one-year-old widower, descendant of a pioneer family, had been carried to the Peoples Cemetery in San Andreas and buried in a plot of honor, on a knoll overlooking the township. A memorial service for the slain officer was conducted under the auspices of the Native Sons of the Golden West.

The all-volunteer San Andreas Brass Band led the funeral procession up Cemetery Hill to his place of final repose.



**Attorney Ira Reed, circa 1885, was appointed to defend the murderer. When he “declined” the appointment, Judge McSorley found him in contempt and sentenced him to five days in jail.**

Six years later, in 1909, having reentered private practice, Jacob Snyder became one of the founders of the newly formalized Calaveras County Bar Association. After taking time out to fight in the Spanish-American War, Charles Peter Snyder joined his brother, Jacob, in the practice of law. Charlie, as he was known, practiced in both San Andreas and Angels Camp, serving the City of Angels as its Attorney. In San Andreas, he was employed as deputy district attorney. When his brother Jacob died in 1915, Charlie was elected to succeed him as the district attorney that same year, holding office until 1923. He then changed his focus to

the practice of civil law and began devoting more time to cattle ranching. In 1929, he purchased the Valley Springs Ranch, where he and his son, John J. Snyder, centered their livestock business, with summer pasturing in the mountains at Post Corral and Prather meadows.

Like his father who served in the Spanish American War, John J. Snyder took time out to serve his country in World War II. Unlike the Schneiders who refused to serve in the army of the tyrant Maximilian II, their descendants did not hesitate to fight for the United States when called upon to do so.

When Charles Snyder died of natural causes in 1945, he was eulogized by Joseph S. Huberty, Sr. on behalf of the bar association, as “an admirable character and a good lawyer.” Further, it was said of Charles:

**... he adhered strictly to the ethics of his profession. His word was as good as his written bond. He was courteous, honest, honorable and fair.**

Joseph Huberty said further:

**Not only does the bench and bar of this community lose a splendid citizen, but it is also an extreme loss to our community. He stood for everything that was good.**

When one reflects upon the contribution of the Snyder lawyers to the community, the emotion evoked is one of awe. Ludwig Schneider’s descendants had taken responsibility for prosecuting all of the county’s



**A pensive Judge Arthur McSorley shown circa 1903, was to have presided over the famous murder trial, but found himself “too close to the case.”**



**Charlie Snyder, circa 1915. In addition to his law practice, he served in the Spanish-American War, and launched a thriving cattle enterprise that still exists today.**

as Amador County district attorney. George Snyder first served in the state assembly, his district covering Calaveras, Amador, Alpine and Mono counties. He retired from the assembly to practice law in neighboring Amador.

After practicing in San Francisco for several years, Will returned to Calaveras in 1935 and was elected justice of the peace in Murphys. He continued to serve in that office until his death in 1945. His son, Cal Snyder, also entered the legal profession, eventually becoming a partner in the Stockton law firm of Mazzera, Snyder, & DeMartini.

Louise Charlotte Snyder, the Snyder brothers' sister, entered the field of law as a legal secretary in San Francisco.

The Snyder family established its legal branch in 1890, and has continued to flourish well into the present [then] century. It was during the heyday of their collective practice that the Calaveras County Bar was formally established.

---

### **Acknowledgements**

This story about the Schneider/Snyder family legal legacy in Calaveras County is a portion of Chapter VI, *Family Legal Dynasties*, reprinted here by permission. This chapter is from the

crimes for more than 30 years, ensuring that the laws were enforced and protecting the body politic against its leanings toward violence and public disorder, thereby easing the transition between centuries.

Brothers Will and George also became lawyers. Will served twice



**Will Snyder, circa 1925, whose legal career included two terms as district attorney of Amador County, and Murphys justice of the peace."**

book *From the Depth of the Mines Came the Law* by Michael B. Arkin and Franklin T. "Ted" Laskin. Both authors are attorneys and lovers of history. Their book explored the history of law in Calaveras County, and chronicled the establishment of the Calaveras County Bar Association. Throughout its pages, the book is sprinkled with lurid or amusing vignettes of the practice of law in Calaveras County. This book was published in 2000 and is available in our museum bookstore and other fine local bookstores.

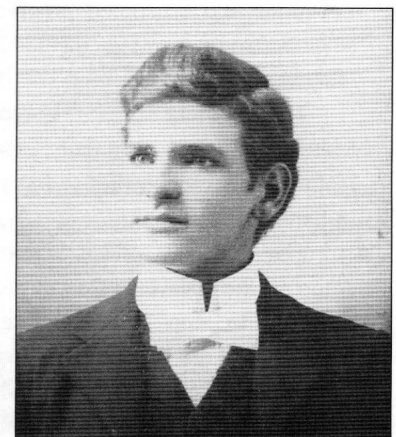
Michael Arkin currently practices law in New Mexico; Ted Laskin is still dabbling in the written arts with his most recent literary credit as a contributor and the fiction editor of the recent edition of *Manzanita: Poetry & Prose of the Mother Lode & Sierra*. He currently practices poverty law in Angels Camp.

For a full account of the famous murder of gentle Deputy James Casey by Julius Martinez, see Sheryl Waller's story in *Las Calaveras*, January 1996.

As one can tell from this brief story of the Schneider family and their legal legacy in Calaveras County, there is more to tell about this fine pioneer family. For more information on the Schneider family immigration to America and to Calaveras County, readers are encouraged to see *Las Calaveras* January 1994. This in-depth look at the Snyder family

also reviews their contributions to cattle ranching.

The name Snyder should be familiar to Historical Society members as John and Betty Snyder have been long-standing members and periodically served as officers. Calaveras County considers itself fortunate to have such fine people in its community.



**George Snyder, shown here early in his career when he served in the state assembly.**

# Calaveras County Historical Society

30 No. Main Street P.O. Box 721 San Andreas, CA 95249

## Officers and Directors

<b>President</b>	<b>Wally Motloch, Mountain Ranch</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Jeff Tuttle, Mokelumne Hill</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>David Studley, Mountain Ranch</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Rosemary Faulkner, Jackson</b>
<b>Directors</b>	<b>Pamela Taylor, San Andreas</b> <b>Bill Claudino, San Andreas</b> <b>Gary Herd, Mountain Ranch</b> <b>Beverly Burton, San Andreas</b> <b>Duane Wight, Lodi</b>
<b>Honorary Director</b>	<b>Willard P. Fuller, Jr., San Andreas</b>
<b>Las Calaveras,</b>	<b>Bonnie Miller</b>
<b>Office Manager</b>	<b>Kathy Cochran</b>
<b>Office Historian</b>	<b>Cate Culver</b>

*Las Calaveras* is published quarterly by the Calaveras County Historical Society. A subscription to *Las Calaveras* comes with membership in the Calaveras County Historical Society for \$22.00 per year. Non-members may obtain copies from the Historical Society office. The original historical material presented in *Las Calaveras* is not copyrighted and anyone is invited to use it. Mention of the source would be appreciated. Contributions of articles about Calaveras County are appreciated and may be submitted to the Historical Society for consideration.

The Calaveras County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation. It meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the County. Locations and scheduled programs are announced in advance. Some meetings include a dinner program, and visitors are always welcome.

The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museum while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058, or contact us at: [CCHS@goldrush.com](mailto:CCHS@goldrush.com).

## New Members

The Historical Society welcomes the following new members:

Wayne & Vicki Maddock, Paloma  
Robt & Mary Virginia Chirardelli, Valley Springs  
Mary Ann Barthold, Jacksonville, OR  
Carol Slater, Sonora  
Bill Villegas, Burson  
Michael & Diane Kriletich, Valley Springs  
Mike & Irene Boylson, Mokelumne Hill  
David G. Kenfield, Murphys  
Lesta & David Chavier, Valley Springs  
Bob & Judy Parker, San Andreas  
Janet Mueller, San Andreas  
Joe A. Dickerson, Atty at Law, Wallace

## New Lifetime Member

Joel H. Springer III, San Andreas

## Donations

The Historical Society is grateful for the following donation:

### November 2006

Kitchen alarm clock and 100th anniversary of flight Teddy Bear—Juanita Newell estate

## FEBRUARY MEETING

Our own office historian Cate Culver will give a lively presentation of her favorite historic Calaveras County photographs that she's had the pleasure of cataloging over the years in her work at the Historical Society. Please join us February 22 for a dinner meeting, at a venue to be announced. Call the Historical Society office at 754-1058 for reservations and details.