

PART 5 OF A MULTI-PART SERIES ABOUT THE MCCARTY GANG BY BAKER CITY HISTORIAN GARY DIELMAN

Many years ago I heard about what seemed to me a mythical “McCarty Gang” of outlaws that had a “hideout” east of Haines. Recently I found out the McCarty Gang is no myth. I was enlightened by reading “In Pursuit of the McCartys,” 2001, 340 pages, including 121 photos and six maps, written by Jon and Donna Skovlin. Reading their book did not happen by chance.

The Skovlins, who lived in Cove, began researching their book about the McCarty family in the early 1970s and finally published it in 2001. Then in 2011 the Skovlins contacted me as curator of the Baker County Library’s historic archives. They offered to donate to the library several boxes of research materials, which detail their 30-year



Dielman

journey, including traveling all over the West, as they “pursued” the McCartys. The result, according to history book reviewers, is the very best book about the McCarty Gang. Sadly, the Skovlins both died in the past five years, Jon in 2013 and Donna in 2015.

This series of episodes (there likely will be eight, published on Fridays; previous articles were in the

Nov. 23 and 30, Dec. 7 and Dec. 14 issues) about the McCarty Gang summarizes the gang’s activities beginning in the late 1880s and is based almost completely on information in the Skovlin book. Not to leave any stone unturned in writing this series, I have recently looked at all of the Skovlin research material.

If this series piques your interest, I highly recommend

you read “In Pursuit of the McCartys.” The book is out of print but available at the Baker County Library and may be found for purchase on the internet. Read the book to discover interesting details about the McCartys in the Northwest and for the McCarty family origins and outlaw activities in several other states, especially in Utah and Colorado, before 1885.

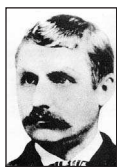
— Gary Dielman

Baker County’s Outlaw Family

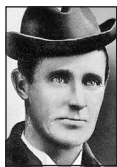
The authorities did not give up easily in their attempt to arrest Bill and Tom. Since the brothers’ horses had shown up at the Jenkins ranch about six miles north of Baker City, lawmen thought the horses were left there on purpose to make it appear that Bill and Tom had hopped a train in nearby Haines.

Nevertheless, Sheriff Conde, District Attorney Hyde, and two deputies had gone to Bill’s ranch house, just in case Bill and Tom had returned. Attempts to get Bill’s wife, Lettie, to allow them to search the house were to no avail. The lawmen were reluctant to enter the house for fear of being ambushed by Bill and Tom but they also wanted to avoid a shootout during which Lettie could be injured or killed. After a lengthy standoff, Lettie finally allowed her house to be searched. A fairly thorough search turned up nothing. One thing they missed was the tunnel from house to barn, which the brothers had dug years ago as an escape route, in case the law ever discovered that Bill’s ranch was the gang’s headquarters and came to arrest them.

There were also warrants for George McCarty and Erasmus “Ras” Christiansen, aka Matt Warner. Washing-



Bill McCarty



Tom McCarty



Lettie McCarty

The McCarty Family

PARENTS

Dr. Alexander G. McCarty b. 1825 in Iowa, and Mary Ann Farmer McCarty b. 1830 in Indiana. Alexander was a physician and surgeon. The parents, after dragging their family all over the Midwest and West, finally settled down for good in 1885 near Myrtle Creek, Douglas County, in the southwest corner of Oregon.

CHILDREN AND SPOUSES

John Thomas “Tom” McCarty, b. in Iowa around 1850, was the leader of the family and the eldest of the McCarty siblings; in 1873 Tom married fifteen-year-old Christina “Teenie” Marie Christiansen; their children: Lewis “Lew” William McCarty, b. 7-4-1874 and Thomas Leonard “Len” McCarty, b. 1868; Teenie’s brother was Willard Erastus “Ras” Christiansen, aka Matt Warner, and aka Ras Lewis, who married Rose Morgan, whose sister was Sara Morgan; William “Bill” McCarty, b. in Iowa 1852; Bill married Lettie Maxwell in 1873; Lettie had been previously married to Alexander Brown, by whom she had a son named E.C. “Eck” Brown; Bill and Lettie had two sons: Fred b. 1871 and Pearl b. 1878. Lois McCarty b. in Indiana 1856; Lois married Hank Vaughn in 1875; they had two sons: Jake and Bert; Lois divorced Hank Vaughn, then married Joseph Rhinehart Hunsaker; they lived in Pine Valley, Oregon; their son Joseph Leonard b. 1887. George W. McCarty b. in Iowa 1862; his first marriage to Ruby Cornelison ended in divorce, one child Claude b. 1879; George and second wife, Nellie Blanchette, were married in Utah Territory 1884; Rosa McCarty, b. in 1866 in Montana Territory; Reatha McCarty, b. 1872 in Salt Lake City; Rosa and Reatha played no part in the lawlessness of their siblings.

ton authorities located Ras at his tent restaurant in Central Washington. According to a newspaper, the 30-year-old, 220-pound Ras vigorously resisted arrest. “He fought like a wild animal.”

On April 3, 1893, Deputy Sheriff Kinison arrested George without incident on Cracker Creek near Sumpter, where he was engaged in mining. George was held



George McCarty

in the Baker County Jail overnight. While in jail in Baker City, George engaged attorney C. A. Johns (later mayor of Baker City) to represent him. The next day George, accompanied by Johns, was under guard on a trail bound for Ellensburg, Washington, with an overnight stay in



Matt Warner

the Umatilla County jail in Pendleton. While George was in jail in Pendleton, he gave the following statement to a reporter for the East Oregonian newspaper. His complete statement is quoted below, since it gives some insight into George’s character during this active period of the McCarty Gang’s criminal escapades.

“My arrest took me completely by surprise. I am entirely innocent of any complicity in the crime charged. Last September, at the time it is alleged the bank robbery occurred, I believe I was at Cracker creek. At any rate I can prove an alibi conclusively. I have not been in Washington for nearly four years. During my residence in Baker county I have been engaged in mining and have been in and about Baker City all the time with the exception of a part of the past winter when I went to Utah with a Mr. Dalton to negotiate the sale of stock in the Shelton mine, returning to Baker City about three weeks ago.”

As the interview continued, George attempted to give brother Tom an alibi and expressed his opinion that Tom and Bill were also innocent.

“Of my brother Tom, who is the eldest of the family and age about 45 years, I have known but little for upwards of fifteen years and have not seen him for two years. I did not know of his presence in the locality of Baker. I have been in the belief that he has been in Arizona engaged in

the stock business. The arrest of both my brothers is as mystifying to me as my own arrest. I do not apprehend any difficulty in securing my own acquittal.”

Sheriff Conde got a warrant for the arrest of E.C. “Eck” Brown, Lettie McCarthy’s son from her first marriage, for holding Conde at bay while Bill and Tom escaped. Eck was jailed but eventually released without further proceedings against him. Eck did not participate in any of the McCarty Gang’s illegal activities.

However, Eck had had his own very serious run-in with the law. On Nov. 24, 1890, at age 21, Eck was working as a waiter in the bar of the Lyceum Theater in Baker City. A drunk customer named F.G. Winningham accused Eck of not giving him his change. A physical altercation ensued, during which Eck struck Winningham a fatal blow in the head with a corkscrew. Eck was charged with murder. At trial the jury found Eck not guilty, believing he had acted in self defense.

After spending nearly a month hiding out in the Jenkins’ haystacks, Bill and Tom left Baker County and Oregon ending up in Utah Territory. Bill’s wife Lettie joined him there. Somewhere along the way to Utah, Bill wrote a letter that was printed in the Baker City newspaper the Morning Democrat near the end of April 1893.

“Editors Democrat: As I left

your part of the country very suddenly and mysteriously I deem it proper to let my friends in Baker County hear from me.... I want all of my friends to know that neither my brother or I had anything to do with the Roslyn bank robbery or any other robbery. We have always made our money honestly and if any man wants to look up our pedigree he can easily do so in Colorado, Montana, Nevada or Utah....

“My reasons for leaving Baker county as I did are as follows: I sold a certain horse to my brother Tom while in Big Bend county (Washington) and he says the animal was stolen from him and was used by one of the Roslyn bank robbers.... I knew well enough that if I went to law it would take all I had to prove my innocence.... [R]ather than take the last cent from my wife and children and see them suffer, I determined to face the strong arm of the law and bid them do their worst. However, I assure you that I will vindicate myself in due time....”

W. A. McCarty

After Sheriff Conde read Bill’s letter in the newspaper, did he still believe in the innocence of Bill and Tom? Or did he chastise himself for being so naive?

One more bank robbery three months later provided the answer and his last glimpse of Bill.

Ethics Commission clears Brown in campaign complaint

SALEM (AP) — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has been cleared of an ethics complaint.

The Statesman Journal reports that the Oregon Government Ethics Commission has dismissed a complaint filed by Bill Currier, chair of the Oregon Republican Party, on Oct. 10. Currier alleged that Brown, a Democrat, may have tried to use her official position to avoid personal and campaign expenses.

The commission concluded that the travel expenses Currier questioned were made by Brown’s Oregon State Police security detail, which protects her whatever she’s doing. It also said there was nothing wrong with her attending campaign events while on official government trips.

Furthermore, the committee said Brown promptly reimbursed the state for two personal purchase made with her state-issued credit card, so there was no wrongdoing there, either.

The commission dismissed the complaint last week after its staff recommended in November that it should be dismissed in its entirety.

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Baker County Veterans office will be closed from December 20th through the 27th. We will be open for business on Friday the 28th.

December 21-27
ELTRYM HISTORIC THEATER
 1809 1st St, Baker City • www.eltrym.com
AQUAMAN PG-13
 (Lesson: Momma, Arthur Curry learns that he is the hero to the underwater kingdom of Atlantis.)
 FRI - THURS: (3:30) 6:30, 9:30
MARY POPPINS RETURNS PG
 (Lesson: After her original visit, the magical nanny returns to help the Banks siblings and Mr. Deaver's children through a difficult time in their lives.)
 FRI - THURS: (3:45) 6:45, 9:35
SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE PG
 (Lesson: Miles Morales comes across the long-dead Peter Parker. With Parker's guidance, Miles will become Spider-Man; and through that he will become part of the ever-expanding "Spider-Verse")
 FRI - THURS: (4:00) 7:00, 9:40
 (Burgandy Matinee)
 Show Times: 541-523-2522
 Office: 541-523-5439

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