

NEVADA HISTORICAL
SOCIETY QUARTERLY

“...*The Back Number*...”



Winter Issue
January-March, 1960

Volume 3
Number 1

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A. J. MAESTRETTI
Chairman

A. E. MACKENZIE
Vice Chairman

Mrs. CLARA S. BEATTY
Secretary

Miss FELICE COHN

Mrs. FLORENCE BOVETT

NOBLE GETCHELL

MILES N. PIKE

A. V. TALLMAN

BISHOP ROBERT J. DWYER

VAIL M. PITTMAN

EXECUTIVE STAFF AT THE LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Mrs. CLARA S. BEATTY
Director

Mrs. ANDY WELLIVER
Assistant to the Director

Founded in 1904 for the purpose of investigating topics pertaining to the early history of Nevada and of collecting relics for a museum, the **NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY** has dedicated itself to the continuing purpose of preserving the rich heritage of the peoples—past and present—who have inhabited the land of Nevada.

The Society believes that it can best serve the State by arousing in the people an historical consciousness which it hopes will be carried to succeeding generations. Thus, through its Director, the Society sponsors an educational program which carries the history of Nevada to the schools and organizations throughout the State.

The Society maintains a library and museum where historical materials of many kinds are on display to the public and are available to students and scholars.

The Society publishes the **NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S QUARTERLY** which publishes articles of interest to readers in the social, cultural, economic, and political history of the Great Basin area: Nevada, eastern California, eastern and southern Oregon, Idaho, and Utah.

The Society's membership is open to the public; application for membership should be made to the Secretary of the Society, State Building, Reno, Nevada.

“. . . THE BACK NUMBER . . .”
The Quarterly of the Nevada Historical Society

Winter Issue

Volume 3

January-March, 1960

Number 1

CONTENTS

LIFE AND CONFESSION
of
JOHN MILLIAN

EDITOR: William C. Miller.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD: Mrs. Clara S. Beatty, Mrs. John Patterson, Dr. Milan J. Webster, Mr. David Myrick, Mr. James W. Hulse, Dr. Vincent P. Gianella.

Subscriptions are \$5.00 per year. New subscriptions will begin with the issue following the date of order. Back issues are unavailable.

The NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S QUARTERLY: *THE BACK NUMBER*, is published by the Nevada Historical Society, P. O. Box 1129, Reno, Nevada. Orders for subscriptions, change of address notices, and undeliverable copies should be addressed to the Society.

Second class mailing privileges authorized at Reno, Nevada.

“. . . THE BACK NUMBER . . .”
The Quarterly of the Nevada Historical Society

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Nevada Historical Society and *The Back Number* are indebted to Mr. James J. Hill, Director of Libraries at the University of Nevada, for his kind permission to reprint the *LIFE AND CONFESSION OF JOHN MILLIAN*. The reader will immediately see the name of Julia Bulette and will assume that we have succumbed to pressures to print popular history. Quite the contrary; we print the pamphlet not because it mentions Julia Bulette but because it shows the type of sensationalism that pamphleteers—the forerunners of the sensational tabloid publisher—resorted to in the 1860's. The pamphlet reveals what we have long believed: Julia Bulette was relatively unknown outside a very limited set on the Comstock. Present-day writers of sensational history have brought her into prominence—a prominence so unwarranted that we would almost forgo printing the pamphlet lest someone think we might publish biographical articles about Julia.

For the new subscriber: the name of the *Quarterly* was suggested by Mark Twain, who urged the publication of a magazine containing “. . . nothing but ancient news, narratives culled from moldy old newspapers and moldy old books, narratives set down by eye-witnesses at the time that the episodes treated of happened . . .”—*Mark Twain's Autobiography*

L I F E
AND
C O N F E S S I O N
OF
J O H N M I L L I A N ,

(PROPERLY, JEAN MARIE A. VILLAIN,)

CONVICTED AS THE

MURDERER OF JULIA BULETTE,

AS GIVEN BY HIM TO HIS ATTORNEY.

V I R G I N I A :

LAMMON, GREGORY & PALMER.

1868.

L I F E
AND
C O N F E S S I O N
OF
J O H N M I L L I A N ,

(PROPERLY, JEAN MARIE A. VILLAIN,)

CONVICTED AS THE

MURDERER OF JULIA BULETTE,

AS GIVEN BY HIM TO HIS ATTORNEY.



VIRGINIA:
LAMMON, GREGORY & PALMER.

1868.

PREFACE BY THE PUBLISHERS.

In publishing the confession of John Millian, convicted of the murder of Julia Bulette, we deem it not inappropriate to give a brief history of the murder and the circumstances that led to the arrest and conviction of Millian.

Sunday morning, January 20th, 1867, Virginia City was thrown into a state of the wildest excitement by the news of a most horrible and revolting murder having been committed during the dark hours of the morning. Julia Bulette, a woman of the town, but still a woman of generous sympathies and one of the best of her class, was found dead in her bed and terribly mangled. She lived in a little house by herself, near the corner of D and Union streets, in a thickly settled neighborhood, and within a stone's throw of the Station-house. The murder was probably committed about 5 o'clock in the morning, but it was not discovered till nearly noon, when the body was cold and stiff in death. A Chinaman, who was employed to make fires and do other work about the place, went into the house as usual, kindled a fire and left, thinking the murdered woman asleep, as she was covered up in bed. About 11 o'clock a woman who lived next door went to the house to call her to breakfast, discovered her to be murdered, and at once ran out and gave the alarm. A large crowd at once collected about the house and an intense excitement prevailed. The murdered woman was found lying on her left side, with a pillow over her head and face, and the bed-clothes beneath her head saturated

with blood. Her throat was lacerated and showed marks of finger nails, and the blood-suffused and distorted countenance, together with the writhing position of the body, showed conclusive evidence of strangulation. The pillow was pressed over her head and face, as though to silence any outcries on her part. On her forehead were two wounds, apparently made by the cock of a pistol or something of that character, and the back of her left hand was somewhat lacerated in her struggles to free herself from the fiend who had her in his power. It was obvious that the object of the murderer was robbery, as a set of furs worth \$400, two gold watches and chains, several costly dresses, gold sleeve buttons, gold crosses, a long gold guard chain with miniature attached and many other valuable articles of jewelry were missing—the murderer had even torn the ear-rings from the ears of his victim. The murdered woman was known here as Jule Bulette, and was a native of London, England, whence she emigrated when quite young to New Orleans, and thence to California, in 1852 or 1853, where she lived in various cities and towns until April, 1863, when she came to Virginia, Nevada. She is said to have been married to a man named Smith, from whom she afterwards separated—and has an uncle and brother still living in the State of Louisiana. At the time of her death she was thirty-five years of age. She was an honorary member of Virginia Engine Company No. 1, and being very kind-hearted and benevolent, was much esteemed among the firemen. She was buried by the Company of which she was a member, and the funeral discourse, which was most able, appropriate and eloquent, was delivered by Rev. Wm. M. Martin. The Coroner's inquest on the body was held May 21st, before Justice Murray, ex-officio Coroner, but no new facts in relation to the mysterious murder were elicited. Every effort of the police to obtain even the slightest trace of the murderer proved unavailing—though the city and country was scoured for a long time in every direction—and at last the murder came to be considered one of those dark and mysterious affairs never to be unraveled.

Some four months passed away, and the murder had almost

ceased to be mentioned or thought of, when on the night of May 2d, 1867, a woman named Martha Camp, living on South O street, discovered a man in her room, armed with a most formidable knife, skulking toward her bed as evidently meditating her murder. She raised an outcry and the man fled by a back door, but she had obtained a pretty fair view of the fellow's face, and afterwards recognized him on the streets and caused his arrest. The man proved to be John Millian, and he was lodged in the County Jail on a charge of an attempt to murder and rob Martha Camp. Millian had been in the jail for some time when on the 24th of May, Mrs. Cazentre, of Gold Hill, informed Judge Pitzer that she had in her possession a dress pattern which she believed to have belonged to Julia Bulette. The dress pattern was brought to this city and recognized by two dry goods merchants as one sold by them to Jule Bulette a short time before she was murdered, and visiting the jail she identified Millian as the man of whom she purchased it. Other facts now came pouring in and on the evening of the same day Chief Edwards succeeded in finding a trunk left by Millian at a bakery on North D street, and in the trunk nearly all the articles taken from the house of the murdered woman. On the 28th of May Millian had a warrant served on him formally arresting him as the murderer of Jule Bulette, and was remanded to prison.

It was remembered about this time—and it shows the nerve and hardened nature of the man—that Millian had the audacity to walk in the funeral procession with a piece of crape about his arm.

Of Millian's subsequent trial and conviction upon the circumstantial evidence that from every quarter rose up against him, it is not necessary to enter into particulars. It is enough to say, that he was indentified by several as the man who had sold to them articles of jewelry, etc., that were at once recognized as having belonged to the murdered woman, and so complete in its details was the chain of evidence thus established, and so overwhelming as a whole, that he was found guilty of murder in the first degree. The efforts made by his counsel to obtain a re-

hearing, and the refusal of the Supreme Court to grant what was asked, all know. All has been done for him by Charles E. DeLong, Esq., his counsel, that could possibly have been done for any human being. Mr. DeLong has labored hard day and night for the man who trusted him with the defense of his life, but no skill or eloquence could successfully battle against the terrible evidences of guilt that surrounded the doomed man.

LAMMON, GREGORY & PALMER.

NOTE FROM MILLIAN'S ATTORNEY.

MESSRS. LAMMON, PALMER AND GREGORY :

Dear Sirs—To you and the public, I address this communication, in justice to myself, and leave you to make such use, or any use of the same you may see proper.

My reason for doing this is that John Millian promised me a full confession of his crime, and a history of his life ; he prepared one with me in his cell, months since, and subsequently, at his request, I returned the same to him, he promising to review and re-write the same and return it to me, which he has since refused to do. This confession I had promised to give you, gentlemen, and I now do all in my power by giving you a brief statement of what his former confession contained, that you may have the benefit of the same and that this whole community may know the extent of his confessions of crime made to me.

Yours, respectfully,

CHARLES E. DELONG.

VIRGINIA, April 23, A. D. 1868.

CONFESSION.

C O N F E S S I O N .

His name as given to me, is Jean Marie A. Villain, a native of St. Malo, France. He emigrated to California in 1849, and remained until 1853, when he returned to France and was conscripted and served in the Marine service during the Crimean war, and served in the trenches there for a period of twenty-three months, being one of the storming party at the fall of the Malakoff fortress, which terminated that memorable siege by the fall of Sebastopol. Subsequently he returned to this coast and pursued various pursuits here and in California, such as working as a boat hand on the Stockton boats—serving as a sailor on coasters in the lumber trade up the coast—driving water-cart in San Francisco, and working on ranches as a laborer, near Oakland, Cal.—and in this State, having worked mainly as a laundryman in this city, and at Mr. Hall's laundry, on the Geiger Grade.

That at some time during his life he had formed the acquaintance of two men, one named Douglass and one named Dillon, two men whom he particularly described to me and others, but whose whereabouts he has never informed me, farther than as will hereafter be stated.

On the night of the murder of Julia Bulette, he, Millian, was passing at the corner of C and Union streets, at the International Hotel, when he saw Douglass and Dillon in private converse; that Douglass spoke to him and said: "How are you, Frenchman?" at which he halted and waited for them a mo-

ment while Douglass and Dillon continued their conversation unheard by him. Presently, he heard Dillon say: "Who will help us?" To which Douglass replied: "Frenchman will do." Dillon replied: "I would rather have Chris." Douglass replied: "No, Frenchman will do;" and turning to him, (Millian), said: "Frenchman, I want you to help us do a little job to-night; there is money in it. Will you do it?" To which Millian assented, and Douglass then turning to Dillon remarked: "Now, you go down and go to bed with her and we will be there;" at which Dillon left, going in the direction of Julia Bulette's house. Douglass then said to Millian, "Come, let us go around and see some of the girls;" at which they both started and visited numerous houses of prostitution in the city, finally coming up Union to near D street, when, Douglass leading the way, they turned from the street to rear of Julia Bulette's house, and when there, Douglass, drawing a piece of wire from his pocket, picked a lock and entered into a sort of vacant place there is under Julia's house, Millian following him. When there, he told Millian to wait while he went up town and got some lunch; at which Douglass started and soon returned with a person accompanying him; but who that person was, Millian was unable to ascertain. When Douglass arrived he produced two bottles, and remarked: "Here, Frenchman, here is some wine for you; we prefer whisky;" and passing Millian some of the lunch and a bottle of the wine, they proceeded to eat and drink in silence, sitting a short distance apart. He (Millian) after eating and drinking, fell asleep and slept—how long, he did not know, being in part stupefied by the effects of the wine.

In a short time, about two hours, as near as he could judge, Douglass aroused him, shaking him, and said: "Come, get up, it is time," whereupon they all went out; when Douglass, handing Millian a cocked revolver at the foot of the steps leading up to Julia Bulette's house, said to him, "Now then, you stand here and if any one comes you give the alarm;" then proceeding up the steps, he placed the unknown third person on guard at the landing, and taking a key from his pocket unlocked the door

of the house and entered. That in a short time he (Millian) heard one smothered exclamation of distress from without, such as "Oh! Oh! Oh!" lengthily and painfully expressed and in a subdued voice, as if of a person being smothered. That in a few moments Douglass and Dillon emerged from the house, Douglass bearing the bulky plunder, consisting of the dresses, furs, etc., on his arm, and tossing them to Millian, remarked, "Here, Frenchman, you take these, you have a room and a trunk," and passing out toward Union street were about to part, when Douglass remarked to Dillon, "Jim, that damned woman would have got away with you if I had not been there." Millian has always insisted to me that this was the first intimation he had that a murder had been committed, and did not know that one was intended. That he conveyed the plunder to his room, the others going in various directions. That in the morning they came to his room, took the diamonds from their settings and sent him to sell them. That he called on Mrs. Moch and asked her if she did not wish to buy some diamonds, and she replied that she would if she could get them cheap and they were good. That he showed her the diamonds, and she, after first inquiring of him how he came by them (all of which questions he answered so that her suspicions were not aroused), agreed to take them to some jeweller and find out what they were worth and let him know. That on his return she informed him that the jeweller told her they were worth one hundred dollars, but that she would not give but seventy-five dollars for them, which he declined to take and returned with them to his room, where he met Douglass and Dillon and returned the diamonds to them. That Douglass sold them to Nye & Co., and subsequently met him (Millian) on the street and gave him some of the money and told him to keep shady and take good care of the things, etc., and that in a few days he would see him again. That he (Millian) being a member of an engine company in Virginia that attended the funeral of Julia Bulette, attended with the company, to avoid suspicion, and following the hearse to the grave wore a piece of crape on his arm as a mourner.

He has always and persistently adhered to this statement to me and never did make any other confession to me. He has also always denied to me being engaged in any other crime or commission of a crime. I frequently urged him to tell me if he knew anything about the murder of C. A. B. Hill, and also about the mysterious murders of women of ill fame that had been perpetrated in San Francisco; he always and persistently denied to me having any knowledge in regard to them, except he stated that on the day or the day after (and I forget which) of the murder of Mr. Hill that he was in Silver City and there met Douglass and Dillon, and suspecting them of having committed the offense asked them about it, when one of them asked him up to drink, and as they approached the bar partially opened a pocket-book, exposing some greenbacks, and in reply to Millian's remark said: "We have got this, and that damned son of a bitch is in hell, and we intend to leave the country at once," and after drinking they left the house, mounted their horses and rode away in the direction of Carson, this being the last he ever saw of them. Millian always denied to me that he was the man that Martha Camp testified was in the house, and which led to his arrest, and has since his arrest until now in all of his conversations and confessions told this same story without variation.

As it has been rumored that he made other confessions admitting other crimes, and that I had protected him and concealed many things that should have been made public, I make this public through this letter of mine to you, and wish to be understood and believed that it is just what, and *all*, John Millain has ever confessed or admitted to me; and this I had his permission to make public, which I do, giving you the benefit of the same if you can realize anything from it.

CHARLES E. DELONG,

Attorney for John Millian.

VIRGINIA, Nev., April 23, A. D., 1868.

CONTRIBUTORS, SOURCES, AND NOTES

Contributor: James J. Hill and the Editor.

Sources: The Library of the University of Nevada.

Notes: How the pamphlet was distributed—from door to door, or sold—we have no idea. The essential facts of the murder are a restatement out of the *Enterprise* and *Gold Hill Evening News*. The pagination of the pamphlet leaves much to be explained; the pamphlet is stitched and shows no signs of having had pages—unnumbered pages with pictures—removed.

A MESSAGE
FROM
THE DIRECTOR OF THE SOCIETY

Historical societies are, for the most part, old institutions. The NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is no exception. Founded in 1904, it has continuously strived to preserve the story of the far west and the State of Nevada in particular, for the coming generations.

Dr. Jeanne Eliz. Wier first saw the need for this organization when she came to the University of Nevada to teach history in 1899. Largely through her efforts the Society was started in 1904. Much of the material, both in the Museum and in the Library, was collected and preserved by her during the 46 years she served as the secretary of the Society.

Through her efforts and the efforts of her successors, Nevadans are coming to realize that, although probably insignificant and unimportant at the time, daily occurrences become historically important with the passing years. In many instances much valuable information is lost.

When too much time is allowed to elapse, early pioneers and settlers of an area are gone and we have to depend upon hearsay for information. Please help us to preserve Nevada's authentic history by sending the Society your old unwanted family pictures, old papers, letters, or anything you feel would be of interest to future Nevadans.

“. . . THE BACK NUMBER . . .”

The Quarterly of the Nevada Historical Society

INSTRUCTIONS GOVERNING MANUSCRIPTS

Since, in all instances, manuscripts will be quoted passages, double-space the manuscript. Indicate occasional errors in the original by [*sic*]; please do not attempt to correct the original, even though the material came from the pen of a beloved, deceased relative. In citing material from a newspaper, give the date, year, page, and column; example: *Virginia Territorial Enterprise*, January 10, 1863, p. 3, col. 1. If the newspaper is citing another source, be sure to note that: *Gold Hill Evening News*, May 15, 1864, p. 3, col. 1; the *News* is quoting the *Enterprise*, May 14, 1864. In citing material from a periodical, use the following form: John Smith, “Dan De Quille’s Humor,” *Anybody’s Magazine*, XXX (March, 1959), 101–114. If from a book, use the following form: John Smith, *A Trip to the Mines of California and Nevada* (Reno: Independent Press, 1870), pp. 43–49. On a page separate from the manuscript, give the following information (see: current issue, CONTRIBUTORS, SOURCES, AND NOTES):

Title of your article: Contributor: your name.

Sources: State specifically where your materials are located: in private collections, libraries, county courthouses, offices of state officials, etc.

Notes: Here make such editorial comment as you feel necessary; here document your sources for the manuscript. Number footnotes consecutively throughout the manuscript.

COMING

Articles on the explorations of:

OGDEN

FREMONT

Reminiscences of a young Englishman
traveling across America in the 1860's

The Citizen's Committee of Aurora