

# Baker County's McCarty Gang

by Gary Dielman

## Author's Introduction

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 pp., including 121 photos and six maps, written by Jon and Donna Skovlin.

My reading their book did not happen by chance. The Skovlins, who lived in Cove, Oregon, began researching the McCarty family in the early 1970's and finally published their book in 2001. 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 thirty-year 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 last five years, Jon in 2013 and Donna in 2015.

This article about the McCarty Gang summarizes the family's activities beginning in the late 1880's and is based almost completely on information in the Skovlin book. If this article piques your interest, I highly recommend you read "In Pursuit of the McCartys." The book was out of print but was reprinted in 2021. It may be ordered at [skovlinbooks@gmail.com](mailto:skovlinbooks@gmail.com). And it may be purchased at Betty's Books in Baker City.

Read the Skovlin book to learn of pre-1885 McCarty family legitimate cattle ranching, supplemented by cattle rustling and horse stealing in southeast Utah and southwest Colorado.

## 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. (Their six children's names are in bold print below.)

### 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, b. in 1864 in Utah, 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.



Tom McCarty      Bill McCarty      Lettie McCarty      George McCarty      Nellie McCarty      Matt Warner

### The McCarty Gang “Hideout” in Baker County

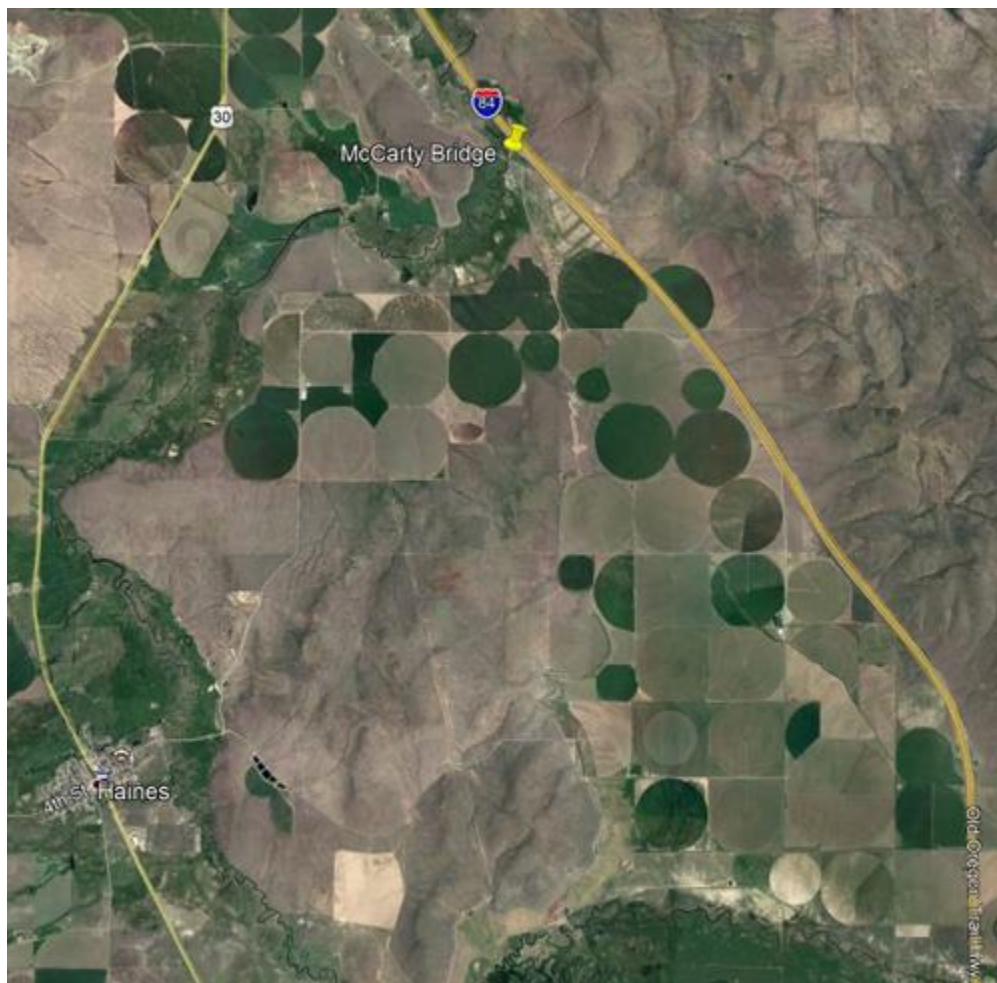
In 1884 Bill McCarty sold his cattle operation in Utah for \$40,000 (about \$800,000 in today’s dollars) and moved to eastern Oregon, where he purchased ranch land in Powder River Valley in an area I call McCarty Basin. The ranch was fourteen miles north of Baker City, four miles south of North Powder, and five miles northeast of the nascent town of Haines, which that summer had sprung up overnight next to the newly-laid tracks of a railroad. In November 1884 the railroad was completed, when crews of the Oregon Short Line coming from the east and the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company coming from the north drove the last spike connecting the two lines just west of Huntington, Oregon. That spike connected Oregon by rail with the rest of the nation. The two companies later became part of the Union Pacific Railroad system.

The term “hideout” with respect to Bill McCarty’s ranch is a bit of an exaggeration, since it lay just a few miles east of the new transcontinental railroad. Plus the Emigrant Road (Oregon Trail) ran right through the middle of the ranch. Nevertheless, McCarty Basin was in those days in a rather isolated part of Oregon.

The McCarty Basin’s most prominent feature was Powder River meandering in tight loops between sagebrush hills. Bill’s ranch lay on the west side of the river’s riparian area. On the east of the ranch house the Emigrant Road was just 200 yards distant. Traffic on the road passed by along the foot of the dry sagebrush-covered hill, thereby avoiding the boggy river bottom. When Bill and Lettie first arrived in the basin, they could have observed emigrants and their prairie-schooner wagons passing by within shouting distance. But with the coming of the railroad, emigrants who could afford it began travelling by train.

The wealthy McCartys also purchased a house in Baker City, where Lettie could lead the life of a lady of means. The house was located on the sparsely-settled north side of Madison Street and across the street from a vacant lot, which in 1910 became the site of St. Elizabeth Hospital, now condominium apartments.

“McCarty Bridge Road” is an official name for the road which runs through the area I call McCarty Basin. The north end of McCarty Bridge Road begins at its junction with Highway 30 a little over three miles south of North Powder. At that junction turn east onto McCarty Bridge Road. Follow this dirt road about a mile east, then southeast another two-and-one-third miles to the namesake bridge. In that last half mile the road dips down off a barren hill into bottom land, which in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was quite swampy. There Powder River, meandering in tight loops, flows under McCarty Bridge and a half mile further north under present Interstate Highway I-84 along the east side of the valley on its way to North Powder.



*Today McCarty Basin is filled with crop irrigation circles. Powder River meanders around the south and west side of sagebrush-covered Coyote Peak on its way to*

*McCarty Bridge and the former site of McCarty ranch. Highway I-84 roughly follows the route of the Oregon Trail along the east side of the basin.*

The office of the Baker County Clerk has property records showing that on November 23, 1885, Bill McCarty, age 33, bought ranch land in Baker County, which lay along both banks of Powder River.

The McCarty ranch house no longer exists. The simplest way to describe where it used to stand is in reference to McCarty Bridge. If you drive to the bridge or locate it on Google Earth, the ranch house stood about 300 feet north and about midway between McCarty Bridge Road and Powder River and about 500 feet west of Interstate Highway I-84.



*Former site of the McCarty ranch house and barn is marked by a yellow stickpin about 300 feet north of McCarty Bridge. At upper left is Coyote Peak east of Haines. Powder River winds its way around the north end of the hill at top middle of this Google Earth image. At the middle right edge of image Powder River crosses under I-84 on its way to North Powder four miles further north.*

Bill McCarty operated his Baker County cattle ranch from 1885 until 1893. The cattle roamed over mostly public land in the summer ranging as far northeast as the Wallowa Mountains. Since winters in Powder River Valley were harsh for cattle raising, in late fall Bill drove them on a four-day trek to the much lower elevation and warmer area of Snake River, where the cattle could again browse on public lands for free. As far as his neighbors and local authorities knew, Bill was just a cattle rancher. That had been his occupation in La Sal, Utah, located on the Colorado border twenty-five miles southeast of Moab, Utah.

The family of Dr. Alexander and Mary McCarty was a tight-knit unit while the children were young, but once they became adults, they went their own ways. In 1885 Bill and Lettie McCarty had settled on their ranch in Baker County. George and Nellie were

mining in the Cornucopia area and had some property on the Idaho side of Snake River. Tom had bought property in Wallowa County and lived for a short time northeast of Joseph and Pine Creek Prairie, where he was appointed Clerk of Elections. Brother-in-law Matt Warner and wife, Rose, conducted a restaurant business in a tent on what they called their TU ranch northeast of Ellensburg, Washington.

Before the McCartys came to Oregon, they had committed plenty of cattle rustling and horse stealing crimes, for which they were seldom held to account. I refer the reader to the Skovlin book for details about the lawless escapades of the McCartys before 1885. Before we get to their crimes after moving to Oregon, I'll describe two bank robberies in Colorado, precursors to bank robberies in northeastern Oregon and eastern Washington.

### Two Bank Robberies in Colorado—1889 First National Bank of Denver and a bank in Telluride

On March 30, 1889, Tom McCarty pulled off a brazen, single-handed robbery of the First National Bank of Denver, Colorado. Using the surname "Wells," Tom lied his way into the office of bank owner, David Moffat. Tom stuck a pistol in Moffat's face and coerced him into writing a check to "Wells" for \$21,000, which he demanded be immediately cashed. In addition to the pistol, Tom, acting crazy, waived a bottle which he said contained nitroglycerin, and threatened to blow the place up and everyone in it including himself, if his demands were not speedily carried out. Tom made off with \$20,000 in large bills and \$1000 in gold coin (about \$575,000 in today's money). Tom's true identity was never officially discovered. Later a woman friend of Tom said he told her all about the robbery on numerous occasions.



*Denver, Colorado, banker David H. Moffat*

During the June 24, 1889, robbery of a bank in Telluride, Colorado, Tom had the help of Matt Warner and none other than Butch Cassidy, for whom Tom was a mentor in the outlaw ways. While a cowboy friend stayed with their horses in front of the bank, Tom, Matt, and Butch entered the bank. There was only one employee in the bank, a teller, but no customers. Upon seeing Matt display his pistol, the teller's hands shot into the

air. With alacrity the robbers stuffed cash into a buckskin pouch and left the bank forcing the teller to proceed them, so he could not get a weapon or sound an alarm. Releasing the teller unharmed, they jumped on their horses and made their getaway with about \$22,000 (about \$600,000 today).

### Enterprise, Oregon, Bank Robbery—October 8, 1891

The 1889 bank robberies in Denver and Telluride were warmups for a series of robberies in Northeastern Oregon and Central Washington pulled off by robbers who became known as the McCarty Gang, led by Tom McCarty, eldest of the family. The other members were his brothers Bill and George, the latter's wife Nellie, and Matt Warner, Tom's brother-in-Law.

Tom was the tactician, who carefully planned the robberies. There were several keys to successful escapes after robberies: 1) Get the fastest horses they could buy or steal and exercise them regularly for speed and endurance. 2) Reconnoiter the best route out of town and through the countryside. 3) Have Nellie waiting with fresh horses about six miles out of town. About the time the horses were becoming fatigued, the bank robbers rendezvoused with Nellie, where they would quickly saddle the fresh horses and take off again at a fast pace. Nellie would then depart with the spent horses in a different direction.

The gang spent a couple of weeks making preparations for the Enterprise bank robbery. They made a trail with a hidden beginning through a thick stand of lodge pole pine trees west of Enterprise and found a place to meet up with Nellie and husband, George. Plus, they reconnoitered a way around a difficult piece of Wallowa Mountains terrain south of Enterprise.



*Wallowa National Bank in Enterprise, Oregon, robbed by McCarty Gang*

Around 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 8, 1891, Tom, Bill, and Matt rode to the front door of the Wallowa National Bank, located in a two-story brick building, the first permanent building constructed in Enterprise. Tom remained outside holding the horses of Bill and Matt, while they entered the bank. At gunpoint they demanded that cashier W.R. Holmes open the vault. Understandably Holmes was frightened and started screaming loud enough to be heard outside the bank. But he complied with Matt's order. Outside three men who had heard Holmes' came running but were stopped in their tracks, when Tom shot at their feet. Grabbing two sacks of coins, Bill and Matt went out the front door of the bank shoving Holmes ahead as a hostage. With the two sacks, later valued at \$3,448 (ca. \$95,000 today), stuffed into their saddlebags, the three robbers raced out of town south toward mountains that towered to almost 10,000 feet. A posse was quickly on the trail of the fleeing trio of robbers.

Hikers of the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area (located in parts of Wallowa, Union, and Baker counties), may be interested in the route the McCarty Gang took through the most densely mountainous area of Oregon on their way to their home base at Bill McCarty's ranch twelve miles north of Baker City. The Skovlins described the route in some detail.

The fleeing robbers followed the timber south along Hurricane Creek, skirted the base of Mt. Joseph, and crossed over the west moraine. Dropping down to the head of Wallowa Lake, they then clambered up over the east moraine. 312-foot-deep Wallowa Lake forms the terminal end of glaciers that carved out Wallowa Lake during several periods of glaciation of North America beginning 3 million years ago and ending 15,000 years ago. At the mouth of McCully Creek, probably at Papoose Lake, they met George and Nellie....Here the two parties split. The bandits, traveling light on fresh horses, headed toward Cornucopia and George and Nellie carrying the sacks of money proceeded over the mountain with the pack string and spent horses.

George and Nellie went on up McCully Creek through the eastern edge of the Wallowas taking the exhausted horses along with the loot and camp stock.

Tom, Bill, and Matt went east through the thick pole timber of Lick Creek and then south across the upper Imnaha River into Baker County. Once over the mountains, they rode west along the foothills past Sparta back to Bill's Powder River ranch. (Skovlin, *In Pursuit of the McCartys*, p. 171)

The identity of the robbers was not discovered until a couple of years later.

### Robbery of the Summerville Bank—November 5, 1891

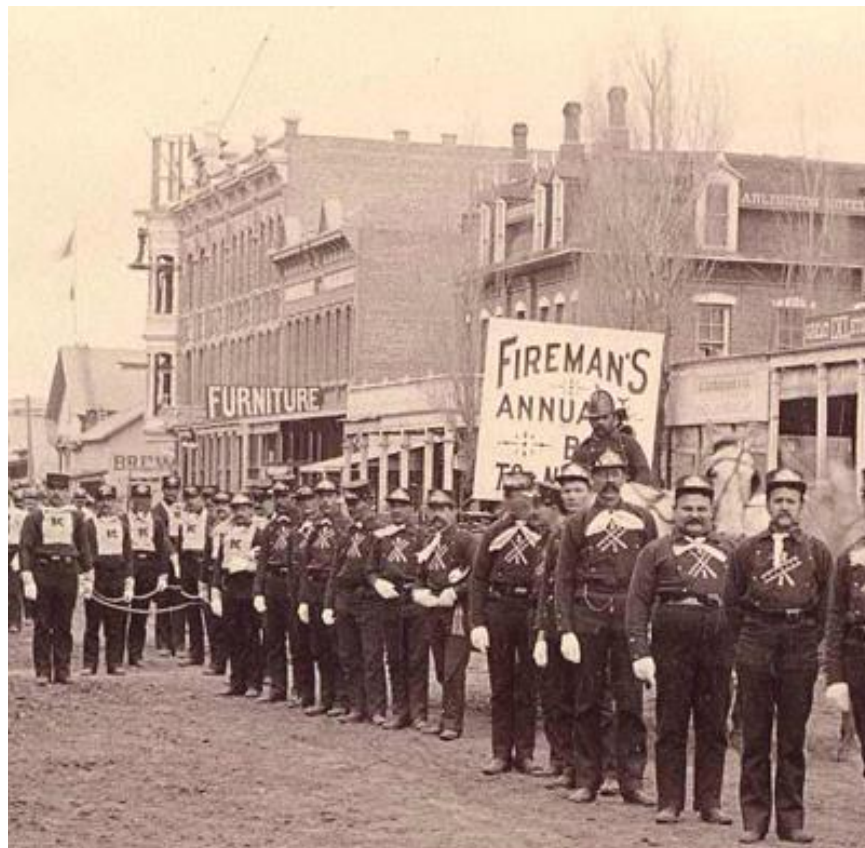
The next McCarty Gang robbery differed from the robbery in Enterprise just a month earlier. First, it was conducted at dark; second, it was only about forty-five miles of well-traveled road north of the gang's headquarters at Bill's ranch in Powder River Valley;

and third, only three members of the McCarty Gang participated: Tom, Bill, and Bill's son Fred. Their target was Valley Savings Bank in the village of Summerville on the western edge of Grande Ronde Valley about fifteen miles north of La Grande, Oregon. The population of Summerville in 1891 was about 280, today about half that.

Their observation of the bank revealed that cashier H.C. Rinehart often worked alone at the bank after closing hours and well into the night. At about 9:00 p.m. on November 5, 1891, Rinehart, after finishing his work for the evening, came out the front door, where he was immediately confronted by Tom and Bill, both masked and on foot. They forced Rinehart at gunpoint back into the bank, coerced him into opening the vault, grabbed all the money they could, and disappeared into the night. Tom and Bill walked to the edge of town, where Fred was waiting with their horses. They took a circuitous route into the mountains that had them back at Bill's ranch the next day. The unidentified robbers had made off with \$4,800 (today's equivalent: \$133,000).

### Aborted Robbery at the Warshauer Hotel—Spring 1892

Robbery was easy but risky money. Perhaps the gang members liked the adrenaline-pumping excitement as well as the money. In any case, they were never satiated no matter how much money they relieved their victims of.



*Warshauer Hotel ca. 1890. Notice man on plank underneath*



*the partially built cupola. North is Rust Brewery, south is Arlington Hotel.  
Volunteer firemen are advertising their annual ball.*

The McCarty Gang's next heist was much closer to home and riskier. The plan was to rob the patrons of the gambling tables at the Warshauer Hotel in Baker City, just a dozen miles south of Bill McCarty's ranch. The hotel, built in 1889 was named for original owners, Jake and Harry Warshauer. The name was changed to Geiser Grand Hotel around 1902, when the Geiser family became owner. In its early days the Warshauer Hotel was the fanciest hotel between Salt Lake City and Portland.

Participating gang members were Bill, George, Tom, and Matt. Bill and George mingled with the players in the gaming room, while Tom and Matt stood near a rear window of the hotel waiting for a sign to enter from Bill and George. Their plan was interrupted, perhaps fortunately, when a deputy sheriff discovered Bill and George lurking suspiciously. When the deputy attempted to arrest them, Tom hit him in the head with the butt of his rifle and he and George fled. Eventually Bill and Matt figured out the stickup plan had been aborted. All four made it home without their identities being discovered and without gaining anything for their effort.

(The Skovlins gave as their only source for this aborted robbery the very short autobiography written years later by Tom McCarty.)

### Attempted Train Robbery Near Telocaset—April 27, 1892

The McCarty Gang made two attempts to rob trains in eastern Oregon. The first attempt failed; the second was a complete success.

The first attempt took place on the Union Pacific Railroad line between Telocaset and North Powder, not much over six miles northeast as the crow flies from Bill McCarty's ranch.

That section of the Union Pacific had been in operation since 1884, when track being built from Portland met up near Huntington, Oregon, with track being built from Lincoln, Nebraska, thereby linking Oregon with the east coast of the United States. Emigration via covered wagon along the Oregon Trail dwindled after 1884.



*Likely site of train robbery attempt. Excavation probably replaced original tunnel.  
View is southwest. Powder River upper left corner. (Google Earth image)*

About four-and-one-half miles northeast of North Powder, Oregon, there was a tunnel on the U.P. line, required in order to maintain as even a railroad grade as possible between Grande Ronde Valley at 2,700 ft. and Baker Valley at 3,400 ft. elevation. No evidence of a tunnel exists today, but in those days it was easier to dig a tunnel under the prominence seen in the accompanying Google Earth photo, than to do the extensive excavation that later replaced the tunnel.

Thinking the east end of the tunnel would be an ideal place to stop the train, the McCartys placed rocks and timbers near the entrance and waited, probably somewhere in the right third of the image. When they heard the train approaching, they pulled their bandanas up under their eyes and, with guns at the ready, waited for the train to appear. There was one problem: in the high desert sagebrush land, there were no trees for robbers and horses to hide behind. As the train approached the tunnel entrance, the engineer spotted the mounted holdup men. Instead of stopping to keep from running into the blockage, he throttled the steam engine full speed ahead. The cow catcher on the front of the locomotive easily scattered the rocks and timbers to the side of the track and kept right on going. The robbers, powerless to hinder the train's progress, went home with empty saddlebags.

### Robbery at Sparta Store—April 30, 1892

Three days after their botched attempt to rob the Union Pacific train, the still-smarting McCartys chose a much softer target, the Sparta store, located in the southern foothills of the Wallowa Mountains twenty-five miles east of Baker City. Sparta was a small gold mining camp that showed promise of growth. In 1872 two Jewish merchants, Sigmund and Seligmann Heilner, built a general merchandise store of native stone, the only non-wood structure in town. Sigmund had recently married Clara Neuberger of Portland. The unrefined life in a mining camp was not to her liking. Besides, business prospects in nearby Baker City looked much more promising. Within a couple of years the German emigrant brothers and Clara moved to Baker City, where they established a business that thrived for over 125 years. The Heilner stone store is still standing as a reminder of their short-lived presence in Sparta.



*Sparta Store in 1900. Owner was Joseph Wright, holding horse at far left. The store was built in 1872 by brothers Seligmann and Sigmund Heilner.*

Around 9:00 p.m. the McCarty Gang, consisting of Tom, Bill, Matt, Fred, George, and Nellie, stood ready to rob the little store, which was still occupied by customers. As usual, Nellie was holding the horses in a clump of nearby trees. George and Fred remained in the street to make sure no more customers entered the store. Tom, Bill, and Matt, all three masked, entered the store. At gunpoint they made everyone move to one side of the room and stand facing the wall. Bill forced the clerk to open the safe and place gold dust and nuggets into a pouch.

As the robbers were about leave, Bill decided he'd help himself to a new pair of boots. He hurriedly tried on some boots while enduring constant chastisement from his companions anxious to make their getaway. After Bill finally decided on a pair of boots, Bill and the others ran from the store to where Nellie and George were holding their horses, and galloped off. Later they all had a laugh at Bill, who discovered he made off with two left boots. Their take, between \$400 and \$500, was also a disappointment.

The Sparta store robbery created much greater loss than the monetary amount the McCarty's stole. Several innocent men, who were identified by eyewitnesses as the robbers, were rounded up, tried, and convicted of the robbery. A couple of the men served ten years in prison.

### Train Robbery at Boulder Gorge—Spring 1892

Not long after their defeat by the powerful Union Pacific locomotive, the McCartys decided to pick on the little narrow-gauge Sumpter Valley Railway (SVRy), which the Oregon Lumber Company in Baker City had built to bring Ponderosa pine timber out of the mountains southwest of town. The gang chose the perfect location to stop the train, which was on its way back to Baker City. About sixteen miles from Baker City was Boulder Gorge, where Power River flowed between two rocky cliffs separated by less than twenty yards. In that narrow passage was a SVRy train trestle.



*The SVRy trestle (above) has been gone from Boulder Gorge for about 75 years.  
Powder River still flows through the river's narrowest passage.*

At that spot Tom, Bill, and Matt placed logs across the tracks. Upon seeing the impediment the engineer stopped the train. When crew members jumped out to remove the logs, the robbers pulled homemade hoods over their heads and emerged from their hiding place with guns displayed. Each robber executed his part of the gang's plan. Tom held the engineer and fireman at gunpoint; Bill entered the baggage car, ordered the express agent to open the safe, and upon compliance, emptied the safe's valuable contents into a sack; meanwhile Matt entered the passenger car and relieved passengers of their valuables.

They jumped on their horses and rode off to execute the rest of their plan. Their getaway route was described by the Skovlins (p. 179).

The trio rode at break-neck speed across the eastern end of Elkhorn Ridge, near Auburn, down through the open ponderosa pine foothills where they met Nellie. She was holding a set of relay horses in the timber above Wingville about three miles out of Baker City. Here they exchanged their take and their spent horses for fresh horses, which they proceeded to ride casually into town, giving the appearance that they had just come from the ranch.

Later they tallied their loot at nearly \$3,000 in cash, plus an unknown amount of gold dust. Today the cash would be worth about \$83,000.

### Wenatchee Bank Robbery—Late Spring 1892

After the robberies in Eastern Oregon, Matt and Rose went to central Washington in early 1892. Matt had already bought ranch property near a siding of the Northern Pacific Railroad, a site that eventually became the town of Ephrata. Besides running some cattle branded 7U, Matt and Rose opened a tent restaurant to feed hungry railroad workers.

Tom, too, came to central Washington for the purpose of scouting out prospective robbery opportunities. He didn't have to look hard before deciding an easy target would be the bank in the little settlement of Wenatchee, population less than 500, located thirty-five miles west of Matt and Rose's 7U ranch. Wenatchee sat at the confluence of the Wenatchee and Columbia rivers and on the route of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

Tom put the word out to the rest of the gang to meet at the 7U ranch. Soon Bill, his son Fred, George, and Nellie arrived from Oregon to plan the robbery of the Wenatchee bank. Everything went as planned. Almost everything. Nellie held fresh horses several miles outside of Wenatchee. Around 10:30 a.m. Tom, Bill, Matt, George, and Fred rode up in front of the bank in Wenatchee. The first three dismounted and entered the bank. Fred held the horses and George remained mounted in front of the bank. Inside the bank Tom, Bill, and Matt commanded everyone to raise their hands. Whereupon a

portly banker began yelling loudly. Told to be quiet the man yelled even louder. So Matt knocked him in the head with the butt of his rifle, which had the desired effect. The man ceased yelling and slumped into his chair.

The banker's silence came too late. His yelling had been heard by people outside the bank. George and Fred were soon faced with keeping a gathering crowd under control. Inside the bank Tom, Bill, and Matt quickly put all the money from the open safe and from the counter into a saddlebag. Within a few minutes the three inside men ran out the front door and mounted their horses. As the five gang members galloped down the street, they could hear shots being fired at them. They turned the first corner headed out of town out of site of the armed citizens.

A quickly-formed posse soon chased after them. The gang members, riding fast horses well-condition for a long ride, had no trouble staying ahead of the posse. After meeting up with Nellie several miles out of town, the robbers, mounted on fresh horses, easily stayed out of range of the posse's rifles. Toward evening the posse, riding tuckered-out horses, gave up the chase and returned to Wenatchee. The identity of the robbers was not known until much later.

Bill's outlaw life and that of most of his siblings did not come to the attention of Baker County authorities until early April 1893. That's when Baker County Sheriff Porter Conde received warrants for McCarty brothers Tom, Bill, and George, plus their brother-in-law Ras Christiansen, aka Matt Warner, all suspected of the September 25, 1892, bank robbery in Roslyn, Washington. If authorities had known that Nellie Blanchette McCarty, George's second wife, held fresh horses for the robbers several miles out of Roslyn, there would have been a warrant for her also. Months went by before authorities connected the McCarty Gang to the robbery.

### Roslyn Bank Robbery—9-25-1992

Around 1:00 p.m. on September 25, 1992, five cowboys rode up in front of the Ben E. Snipes & Co. Bank in the little town of Roslyn, Washington, located about fifty miles northwest of Yakima. Three of the riders dismounted (probably Bill, Fred, and Matt), gave their reins to the other two (probably Tom and George), and entered the bank. They immediately drew their revolvers and announced the stickup. One of the robbers proceeded to jump into the cage area and began loading loot into a bag.

Outside people sensed something was going on at the bank. A crowd began to assemble. One of the robbers inside the bank went out to make sure the two gang members in front of the bank could handle the situation. He discovered that citizens had alerted the town marshal, who, quickly assessing the situation, shot at the two horsemen, who returned fire. Other armed men came running. The mounted robbers fired wounding two of them. Upon hearing the gunshots, the three men inside the bank hurried out, jumped on their horses, and all five gang members galloped out of town as fast as they could. A posse was quickly assembled and headed out of town after the

robbers. After meeting up with Nellie and jumping on fresh horses, the fleeing robbers increased their lead on the posse, which gave up the chase as night fell.

The McCarty Gang had made off with about \$5,000 (valued today at \$170,000). After riding about fifty miles, they reached the Columbia River, where they found an old rowboat but no oars. They used planks of wood as oars, which made rowing across the Columbia very slow. During an all-night operation requiring many trips back and forth, they managed to get men, Nellie, and horses to the other side of the river. As was their usual escape routine, they split up. George, Nellie, and Fred went north, Matt returned to the 7U ranch, and Tom and Bill headed south to Bill's ranch in Oregon.

A month after the robbery the gang learned that three men from Pendleton, Oregon, had been arrested based on eyewitness identifications. The McCartys celebrated thinking they were free of any suspicion of having committed the robbery of the Roslyn bank.

Several months later the State's case against the Pendleton defendants fell apart. The trial of the first defendant ended in a conviction. But he appealed when new evidence came to light. A second defendant's trial ended in a hung jury. By the end of February 1893, charges were dropped against all three Pendleton men. The relief the McCarty Gang experienced upon learning of the charges against the Pendleton men was about to come to an end.

Banks don't like being robbed. Investigators continued searching for the real bank robbers. Finally they got a break based on identification of one of the horses ridden by the robbers in their flight out of town. After riding several miles as fast as they could, they had abandoned their spent horses. One of those horses showed up back in Roslyn. It was a thoroughbred with distinctive markings. Through clever detective work the horse was traced to Matt Warner, who was the link to the rest of the McCarty Gang.

### **Betrayal Within the Family**

Back in 1892, when Matt and Rose were living on their 7U ranch, Rose, who was pregnant, convinced her sister, Sara Jane Morgan, to come up from Utah to keep her company during Matt's frequent absences. But after Sara arrived at the 7U ranch, she discovered that Rose's life with Matt was not a pleasant one. She learned that Matt and his McCarty brothers-in-law were engaged in robbing banks. Even more disturbing was learning that when Matt had been drinking he was abusive toward Rose. At times she intervened to protect Rose from Matt's rages. Perhaps that's why Matt did not trust Sara. At one time he threatened that if she told anyone about the gang's activities, he would cut off her nose and ears. On another occasion, as a warning not to cross him, Matt put a gun to her head and then shot into the ceiling.

One day a detective came around asking questions about Matt. Soon thereafter Sara left Rose and the 7U ranch by train and returned to Utah. In order to protect her sister

from Matt and his way of life, she promptly went to the Salt Lake City police department and told them all about the Roslyn bank robbery.

The Salt Lake Police Department shared with Denver police Sara's information about the McCarty Gang's involvement in the Roslyn bank robbery. When Denver ex-Chief of Police Farley first heard about the Roslyn bank robbery, he had suspected the McCarty Gang. After warrants were obtained for the gang members based on Sara Morgan's information, Farley traveled to Baker City to participate in the serving of the warrants. In his report of the attempted arrest of Tom and Bill, he wrote, "The Sheriff of Baker County never believed that Billy McCarty was guilty of any offense and laughed at the idea of suspecting him of bank robbery. We went to Haines with a party of four men, in addition to ourselves. When we got there, the Sheriff said, 'Let's leave the men (in Haines) and you and I will go down to Billy's house and I will introduce you as an army officer desiring to buy horses.'" The rest of his report is completely different than the following account, apparently obtained from Sheriff Conde. Farley did not accompany Conde to Bill's ranch east of Haines.



*Porter "Pat" Alexander Conde, Baker County Sheriff 1890-1894.  
In 1894 Conde was appointed U.S. Marshall. In 1905 Conde was living at 2037 7<sup>th</sup>. He  
was engaged in mining; part owner of Magnolia Mine. In 1908 ran for Baker County  
Assessor. (askSam)*

With warrants of arrest for Bill and Tom in hand, Sheriff Conde went alone to Bill's ranch. By 1893 Bill had been living in Baker County for eight years. Conde, who had known both Bill and Tom for several years, believed the warrants must have been based on misidentification, as was in fact the case; Roslyn authorities had arrested innocent Pendleton men. Conde did not anticipate having any problem executing the warrants. Upon encountering Bill outside the ranch house, Conde told him that he had a

warrant to arrest him for bank robbery. Bill flat out denied ever having robbed a bank. Conde assessed that Bill's demeanor indicated he would not resist arrest. Bill asked that he be allowed to go into his house to change clothes. Conde asked if Tom was also at the ranch. When Bill said yes, Conde informed him that he also had a warrant for Tom's arrest. Bill led Conde into the house.

Conde's naïve belief in the innocence of both men proved to be a colossal blunder. Once inside the ranch house, Tom, who had been watching through a window, jumped Conde and disarmed him. About this time Bill's step-son, Eck McCarty, came into the house. Eck was assigned the task of holding a gun on Conde, while Tom and Bill ran to the barn, jumped on their horses, and took off.

After fleeing several miles south, the brothers tied their horses to some willows, then climbed to a high point to see if anyone was pursuing them. Satisfied that no one was coming, they returned to where they had left their horses to find they had gotten loose and were nowhere to be found. They were now on foot and it was raining. Spotting a couple of haystacks standing side by side on the Jenkins ranch, they decided to hide in place. They spent most of the night hollowing out living quarters within the haystacks.

The Jenkins ranch was on the site of the old Slough House on the Oregon Trail about six miles north of Baker City. Believing Jenkins was a man they could trust, Bill and Tom informed him of their predicament, no doubt asserting their innocence. They prevailed upon him to provide them with food and information, while they waited for the hunt for them to cool off. After about a month, they decided the authorities had given up looking for them and left Baker County.



*Bill and Tom McCarty spent a month hiding out in a couple of hay stacks on the Jenkins ranch about six miles north of Baker City. The old Slough House was located on the Jenkins property a little south of the Powder River Slough.*

Sheriff Conde was lampooned in the press. Based on a news story from Baker City, the Eastern Oregonian newspaper's headline read: "A HUGE JOKE ON SHERIFF CONDE"; "While Trying to Arrest the Suspected Robbers He is Himself Made a Prisoner by One of the Gang."

Law enforcement officers did not give up easily in their attempt to arrest Bill and Tom. Since the brothers' horses had shown up at the Jenkins ranch, lawmen thought the



horses were left there on purpose, so it would appear that Bill and Tom had hopped a train in nearby Haines. Nevertheless, Sheriff Conde, District Attorney Hyde, and two deputies went 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 shoot-out during which Lettie could be injured or killed. After a lengthy stand-off, Lettie finally allowed her house to be searched. A thorough search turned up nothing. But it was not thorough enough. They missed a 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.

Authorities also possessed warrants for George McCarty and Erasmus "Ras" Christiansen, aka Matt Warner. Washington authorities located Ras at his tent restaurant in central Washington. According to a newspaper, the thirty-year-old, 220-pound Ras vigorously resisted arrest. "He fought like a wild animal."

On April 3, 1893, Baker County Deputy Sheriff Kinison arrested George McCarty without incident on Cracker Creek near Sumpter, where he was engaged in mining. While lodged in the Baker County, 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 train bound for Ellensburg, Washington, with an overnight stay in the Umatilla County jail in Pendleton. A reporter for the Eastern Oregonian newspaper interviewed George in jail. 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 Eck 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 and was not suspected in any of the McCarty Gang's illegal activities. However, Eck had had his own very serious run-in with the law. On November 24, 1890, at age twenty-one, 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' hay stacks, Bill and Tom left Baker County and Oregon ending up in Utah Territory. Somewhere along the way to Utah, Bill wrote a letter that was printed in the Baker City newspaper 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, did he still believe in the innocence of Bill and Tom? Or did he chastise himself for being so naïve? One more bank robbery three months later provided the answer.

George and Matt were held for trial in the Kittitas County Jail in Ellensburg, Washington. Meanwhile Bill and Tom, who successfully avoided arrest, fled to their old stomping ground in eastern Utah. Although some speculate that before heading south they detoured to Ellensburg to help George and Matt escape from jail. Someone, most likely Bill and Tom, managed to smuggle a crowbar to George and Matt. With it they knocked a hole in the bricks big enough to slip through. Once outside the jail they located two revolvers hidden by their accomplice(s) under the jail's boardwalk. The escape was discovered immediately, gunshots were exchanged, and a citizen was wounded. Soon Matt and George were back in jail suffering from buckshot wounds of their own.

At the end of May 1893, Matt and George had separate trials, one right after the other. On the stand George testified that he was prospecting with his wife at the time of the robbery. A newspaper report noted, "Nellie, his wife, and by the way a woman of fine appearance, sat by her husband all through the trial and when called to the witness stand, corroborated his testimony." Each trial ended in a hung jury.

However, George and Matt were not released from jail. Rather both men were held for retrial. On September 6 the retrials were supposed to take place, but to the defendants' delight, the cases against them were dismissed, because witnesses were not available. They still faced criminal charges against them for breaking out of jail and wounding a man. Surprisingly the judge also dismissed those cases, this time for lack of evidence. How the judge came to that conclusion is not known. Finally, miraculously, Matt and George were again free men. Nellie was never charged with a crime. It was a sad day for justice in Kittitas County but a joyous day for Matt, George, and Nellie.

The McCarty Gang was done with committing crimes in the Northwest. George, Matt, and Nellie paid no penalty under the law. Tom, Bill, and Fred had fled to their old stomping grounds in the La Sal area of eastern Utah, where they planned another bank robbery to obtain funds for the defense of George and Matt in Washington. They were unaware that, as of September 6, the rest of the McCarty Gang no longer faced prosecution for the Roslyn bank robbery. The robbery that Tom, Matt, and Fred were planning would be their last, and fateful, robbery.

### Delta Bank Robbery—September 7, 1893

Delta, Colorado, was a small town less than thirty miles southeast of Grand Junction, Colorado, and about fifty miles as the crow flies from La Sal, Utah. The Farmers and Merchants Bank building, located on the town's two-block Main Street, was a very unassuming narrow wood-frame structure that also dealt in second-hand merchandise. It must have looked like easy pickings to three experienced bank robbers.

At mid-morning Tom, Bill, and Fred rode to the back of the bank, where Bill and Fred dismounted and walked to the front of the bank. Tom stayed mounted holding the reins of their horses. Peering through the front windows, which displayed used items for sale, Bill and Fred could see two customers at the counter. As soon as both customers had left the bank, Bill and Fred entered, drew their revolvers, and ordered the only two employees on duty, cashier Trew Blachly and assistant cashier Harry Wolbert to stick up their hands. Wolbert complied. Fred jumped onto the counter in time to see Blachly reaching for a revolver under the counter. Instinctively Fred fired at Blachly missing him completely, then immediately fired again. The second bullet hit Blachly in the head killing him instantly.

Fred jumped behind the counter, stepped around Blachly's body and grabbed a sack of gold coins from the open safe, plus some currency. Then Fred and Bill left out the bank's back door, mounted their horses, and with Tom in the lead raced down the alley

behind the bank. In mounting his horse, the sack of gold coins slipped from Fred's hand. In his panic to get out of town—he had just shot and killed a man—he did not stop to retrieve the sack of gold coins.

The two gunshots alerted the town that the bank was being robbed. Young Ray Simpson, an employee in Simpson's Hardware Store, was working in his father's store across the street from the bank. Hearing Blachly cry out and then two gunshots, Simpson grabbed his .44-70 caliber single-shot Sharps rifle and ran to the corner of Main and Third streets in time to see the robbers fleeing down the alley with Tom in the lead, followed by Fred, and Bill.

Before Bill could disappear cross the intersection of the alley and Third Street, Simpson drew a bead on him and fired. The shot hit Bill in the back of his head. He dropped from his galloping horse and was probably dead before he hit the ground. Simpson ran to the alley where he could see that Fred had stopped in the alley a block away to look back for his father. It was just enough time for Simpson to load another bullet into his rifle and fire. The bullet hit Fred in the side of the head knocking him from his horse.

Simpson, anticipating that Tom would turn left out of the alley toward Main Street, ran back to Main, where he spotted Tom racing down the street as fast as his horse would carry him. Simpson fired and reloaded several times. The bullets went whizzing by Tom but none hit their mark. Tom rapidly receded in the distance. The local sheriff organized a posse to pursue Tom. But Tom had too much of a lead and the posse never made contact.

### What Became of the McCartys?

The bodies of Bill and Fred were buried in a single casket and grave in potter's field in the Delta cemetery, an undignified burial that showed the town's disdain for the men who attempted to rob their bank and killed cashier Blachly, a husband and father of eight children. The identity of the killers was not immediately known, although there was speculation that they were part of the McCarty Gang. On the day after the robbery the Denver Times ran a front-page story about the Delta bank robbery, including the identity of the robbers. The newspaper reported that Baker County Sheriff Porter Conde, upon reading a news story about the Delta robbery, wired Denver ex-Chief of Police Farley, that members of the McCarty Gang were in the area.

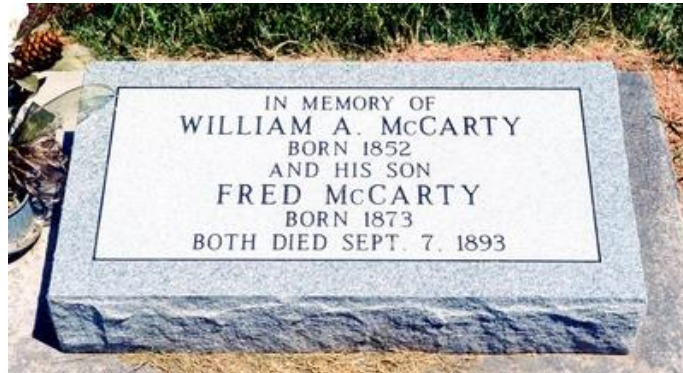


Before burial, the bodies of Bill and Fred were propped upright and photographed. Fred was 5' 5" tall and obviously the younger of the two. The other body looked to be that of a man perhaps 40 years old, 5' 7" tall, and about 178 pounds. Two boards were placed under Bill's body like crutches to keep it upright for the photo taking. Rigor mortis in Fred's body made the assistance of boards unnecessary.

Persons who knew Tom and Bill arrived in Delta, including Baker County Sheriff Porter Conde, who Bill and Tom had made a fool of when he tried singlehandedly to arrest them in Baker County. Conde and one of Tom's relatives both misidentified Bill's body as that of Tom. Several weeks later the mistake was cleared up, when Tom started sending menacing letters to Ray Simpson saying he'd get even with Simpson for killing his brother and nephew. In Delta sharpshooter Simpson was honored as a hero.

For many years a crude sandstone marker with the engraving "McCarty Bros. 1893" stuck awkwardly out of the ground at the common grave of father and son, misidentifying them as brothers. In 2001 a very dignified flat marble stone was set at their grave site with this inscription: "In Memory of William A. McCarty Born 1852 and His Son Fred McCarty Born 1873, Both Died Sept. 7, 1893."





McCarty Gang parents Dr. Alexander G. McCarty, died in 1894, and Mary Ann McCarty, died in 1913. They are buried beside each other in Myrtle Creek, Oregon.



*Lettie McCarty*

In 1904 Bill's wife, Lettie, sold the 600-acre ranch on Powder River. She lived in their two-story house in Baker City, which was on the north side of Madison Street two lots in from 4<sup>th</sup> Street, just north across Madison Street from the future site of St. Elizabeth Hospital. Lettie's sons Pearl and Eck were also living in Baker City. Eck had married Fannie Anderson of Moab, Utah, where their son, Cornelius, was born in 1897. Pearl married Della Chapman of Baker City. In 1917 Lettie moved to Lovelock, Nevada, where she lived with Eck and Pearl. She died in 1929. Nothing further is known of her sons or their spouses.



*George and Nellie McCarty*

George and Nellie McCarty settled across Snake River from Homestead, Oregon, where George could follow his passion for prospecting for gold. In 1895 George discovered a vein of gold on Flagstaff Hill six miles northeast of Baker City. He and three other prospectors sold their interest in the Flagstaff Mine for \$51,000. Today the top of the hill above the mine is the site of the National Oregon Trail Interpretive Center. Apparently George did not sell all of his mining interest in the Flagstaff Hill area. According to this news item in the November 11, 1909, edition of the Morning Democrat, "George McCarty of Homestead, part owner of the Friday Mine east of this city, is in town after doing assessment work." The Friday Mine was located on Ruckles Creek about two miles southeast of Flagstaff Hill. The same newspaper wrote that George was visiting in Baker City on November 3, 1909. He was probably visiting his sister-in-law, Lettie. Nellie died in Halfway, Oregon, in 1937 and George in 1948. They are buried beside each other in the Halfway cemetery.

The McCarty brothers' sister Lois married Hank Vaughn in 1875. They had two sons, Jake and Bert. After divorcing Hank Vaughn, Lois married Pap Hunsaker. Son Joseph was a product of that marriage. Also living with them was Hunsaker's son William by a former marriage. They lived on Pap Hunsaker's ranch in Pine Valley. Lois died in 1896.

That's the same year Lois' sons, Jake and Bert, discovered a copper ledge, which they named Iron Dyke Mine. A year later they sold the copper mine for \$40,000. Bert bought with his share a ranch on the edge of Halfway, mining interests in Cornucopia, and had a saloon in Homestead. With his share of the Iron Dyke Mine sale Jake bought ranch land he called The Copperfield located at the confluence of Snake and Pine rivers below the Oxbow of Snake River.



*Today this is the site of an Idaho Power campground and the former site of Copperfield.*

In the spring of 1907, anticipating the influx of workers to the Oxbow area due to construction of two tunnels (one for power generation and one for a railroad through the Oxbow), Jake Vaughn sold his 160-acre farm to James Harvey Graham, a Baker City realtor, who then platted the land for the town Copperfield. Graham soon sold out to Baker City bankers John Schmitz and William Pollman, the then current mayor of Baker City.

In 1896, Matt Warner was involved in a shooting near Vernal, Utah. Two men died. He was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to five years in prison. In January 1900 Matt was released for good behavior after serving only three years. For a while he ran a saloon in Green River, Utah. Matt's wife, Rose Morgan McCarty, whom he married in Utah when she was fourteen years old, gave birth to a child and died while Matt was in prison. The child was given up for adoption. In 1902 Matt married Elma Zufelt and they had five children. After release from prison, Matt had vowed to leave his outlaw life behind. Proof that he kept that vow is the fact that he worked as a city marshal, deputy sheriff, and justice of the peace in Price, Utah, where Matt and Elma lived beginning in 1915. In 1937 a writer named Charles Kelly helped Matt write his memoirs, which were published serially in January 1938. Matt died later that year.

Tom McCarty's only arrest and conviction was in 1877 for holding up a railway station agent in Nevada, for which he was sentenced to one year in the Nevada State Prison. After release in 1878, he never again served time in jail or prison for the many crimes he committed during the next decade and a half of horse stealing, cattle rustling, train robberies, and bank robberies. The closest he got to being held accountable during that period was when Baker County Sheriff Porter Conde botched his attempt to arrest singlehanded Tom and Bill at Bill's Powder River ranch in April 1893.

At one time there were more rewards for Tom McCarty than for any other outlaw in the West. The Skovlins list reward amounts in their book about the McCartys: Moffat bank



in Denver \$2,500; Telluride bank \$250; Enterprise bank \$500; Summerville bank \$250; Roslyn bank \$3,000; Baker County reward \$1,000; Delta bank \$500; and various Utah rewards \$2,000. The rewards totaled \$10,000 (in today's money about \$280,000). Yet Tom was never arrested and no one ever collected a penny in reward money.

By 1900 Tom McCarty had given up the outlaw life and returned to a place where he knew he was reasonably sure of not being arrested. It had been seven years since the Delta bank robbery, which was no longer in the news, and the statute of limitations had run on most of his criminal activity. As added insurance, the place he chose to retire to was the Imnaha River area in northern Wallowa County, Oregon, where he had a decade prior bought property. Just over the ridge to the east of the Imnaha River Valley was Hells Canyon, through which Snake River had carved the deepest canyon in North America, an area about as remote as any place in the United States. Nevertheless Tom was taking a calculated risk returning to Wallowa County, where in 1891 the McCarty Gang robbed the bank in Enterprise, the county's seat of government. The perpetrators of that robbery had not yet been discovered.

Tom found employment with Wallowa County. In 1903 the county court appointed Tom Imnaha road supervisor. Tom's district covered an area of 325 square miles or 200,000 acres, and included nine townships. Tom was reappointed road supervisor in 1905 and also Judge of Elections for that precinct. In 1906 Tom and his crew built a six-mile stretch of road in his district that became known as McCarty Road. Also named for Tom was McCarty Springs and McCarty Creek. Sometime before 1912 Tom served as Justice of the Peace for the Upper Imnaha District.



*Tom McCarty*

After 1917, Wallowa County records make no further mention of Tom McCarty. Many historians of western outlaws have speculated about Tom's whereabouts and activities after 1917, but none has provided proof of a final resting place.

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## Addendum

A Strange Coincidence:

## Another Outlaw Made His Home in McCarty Basin

In 1905, twenty years after the McCarty Gang first occupied desolate McCarty Basin, notorious mass murderer Steve Adams obtained land in the basin three miles south of Bill McCarty's ranch, thereby achieving for himself a place in Baker County history. It's a whole other story, but I think readers will find an introduction to the coincidence of his short residence in Baker County interesting.

On December 30, 1905, Frank Steunenberg, ex-governor of Idaho, was assassinated by a dynamite bomb attached to the gate post of his residence in Caldwell, Idaho. Baker County Sheriff Harvey K. Brown, who happened to be in Boise, was instrumental in the arrest of Harry Orchard, whom the leadership of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) in Denver, Colorado, had hired to assassinate Steunenberg as retaliation for his intervening in a mining strike in northern Idaho in 1899. After capture, Orchard confessed and implicated the WFM's leadership, as well as his partner in crime Steve Adams.

Steve Adams also worked as a hired thug for the leadership of WFM. Orchard and Adams worked together on several murderous assignments. The most outrageous was blowing up the railway platform at Independence, Colorado, killing thirteen scab miners (strike-breakers) and injuring many others. Adams had also gotten the assignment to assassinate Steunenberg, but never found the opportunity.



*Hired assassin Steve Adams*

Idaho prosecuted three WFM's leaders for ordering the assassination of Steunenberg, but the State needed someone to corroborate Orchard's confession. Idaho officials obtained a warrant of extradition of Steve Adams from Baker County, Oregon. On February 19, 1906, Sheriff Brown went to Adams' ranch in McCarty Basin, where Adams was living with his wife and young children. Brown arrested him and placed him in the Baker County Jail. The next day Brown convinced Adams to return to Idaho as a State's witness. Adams was taken to Boise, where he confessed to many crimes committed at the behest of the WFM. Subsequently Adams renounced his confession. Without Adams' corroboration of Orchard's confession, the State of Idaho failed to convict the three WFM's leaders.

Steve Adams was tried for crimes in Colorado, where he was found not guilty for lack of evidence. He never returned to Oregon. He was never convicted or sentenced for any of his murderous crimes.

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