

March 31, 1969

Mr. Jerry MacMullen  
3659 Van Dyke Ave.  
San Diego, California 92105

Dear Mr. MacMullen:

Recently, I spoke with Mr. Clyde Arbuckle of the Santa Clara County Historical Society and he suggested that I contact you. (To use his specific words "sicked me onto you!")

I recently came into the possession of an old American Bulldog .44 caliber revolver. While of little value in itself as an antique, its history, or rather the history of its owner may be of interest. It belonged to one Will J. Ward. Mr. Ward apparently was born in 1850, served as a lawman in Tombstone, Arizona, about 1884, and then as a deputy sheriff in San Diego up to 1899. During 1899 he was escorting a prisoner to San Quention prison when the prisoner hit him over the head with a water bottle killing him. These are all the facts (?) I have concerning Mr. Ward, except that a museum in Arizona (Tombstone?) has some of his possessions.

The revolver came to me in a very round about way. Mr. Ward's daughter apparently had this revolver in her safety deposit box for many years. Sometime back, she closed out her box and gave the gun to the bank manager, one Mr. Newman. Her instructions were to give the gun to anyone interested in guns and Western history. Mr. Newman contacted Mrs. Stewart N. Lake whose husband you undoubtedly knew by reputation, if not personally. Mrs. Lake thought of me because I collect, restore, and write about antique firearms. She is a close friend of Mrs. Frank H. Beck whose cartoonist husband you also may have known. Mrs. Beck is my Mother-in-law. Thus the revolver finally reached me.

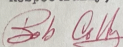
I have just written Mr. Newman via my Mother-in-law to see if I or at the least he can interview Mr. Ward's daughter. She apparently still lives in San Diego although quite old and possibly somewhat senile. I also plan to write the San Diego Sheriff's Department and then when I get some names, places, and dates the State Attorney General's Office and Warden of San Quention Prison. I also am attempting to check with past personnel of the County Corner's Office. (My Father was an autopsy surgeon there for some 25 years.) I was about to write the San Diego Union when I spoke to Mr. Arbuckle. He suggested that I write you first, especially since your Father was Editor of the Union around the turn of the century.

While I never have done an historical article, I have written a number of technical-type articles on antique firearms for such publications as THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN and GUN DIGEST. If research warrents it, I would like to document the history of Will J. Ward

and possibly his last (?) gun.

I will greatly appreciate information on whom to contact in my efforts to trace Mr. Ward's history or, if you feel so inclined, any information you may uncover yourself. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,

  
Robert E. Colby

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