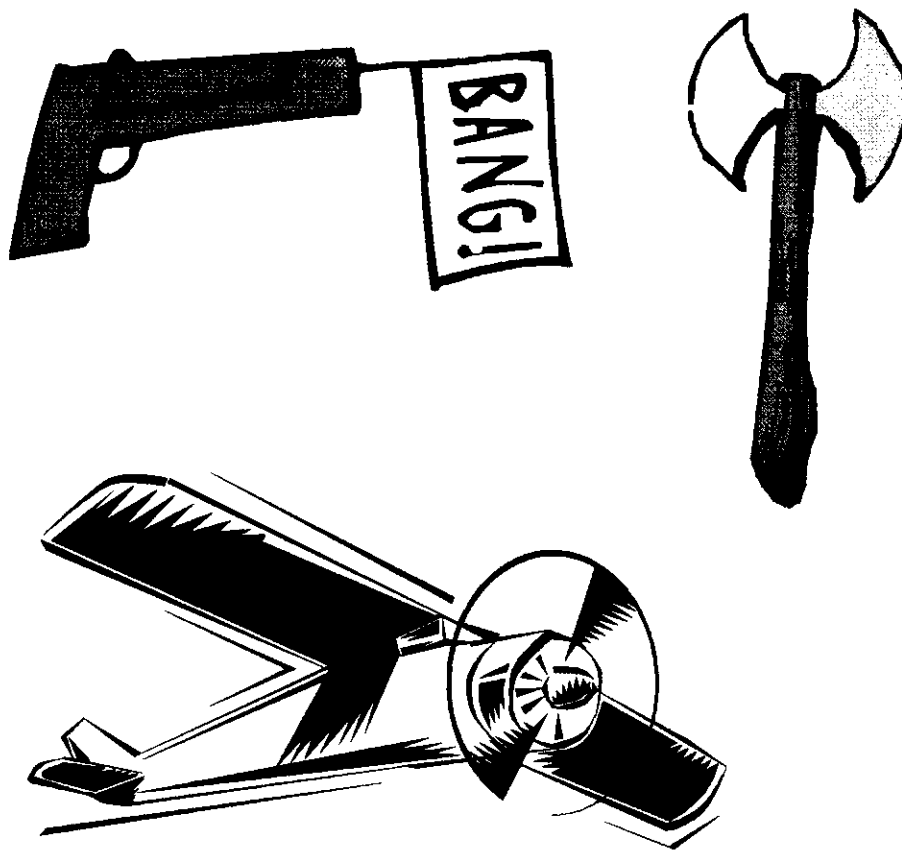


“The Dunham Murder Mystery And The Man With Wings”



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Table of Contents

Preface.....	Page 1
“The Dunham Murder Mystery”	Page 2
“The Man with Wings”	Page 3
Bibliography and Sources.....	Page 4

“Preface”

I chose to write about the Dunham Murder Mystery and the life about John Joseph Montgomery for the 2001 Santa Clara County Historical Essay Contest. I wrote about the Dunham Murder Mystery because stories of murder and mystery fascinate me. I find it highly interesting why murders kill and how the F.B.I and other police forces solve these types of cases. The Dunham Murder Mystery might have gone down in Santa Clara History as the most brutal murders in the county. Overall murder stories and mysteries are my favorite type of books to read. The other story I chose to write about for my essay was about John Joseph Montgomery. He was a man interested in the field of aviation and trying multiple times for man to fly. I wrote about John Montgomery because I am also interested in the field of aviation and his efforts to fly like a bird. I plan to show you in great detail about these Historical Events in Santa Clara County. These are the reasons why I chose these topics for the 2001 Santa Clara County Historical Essay Contest.

“The Dunham Murder Mystery”

Is there a more hideous murder in Santa Clara history than the Dunham Murder Mystery? These murders were so brutal in such a way it was like work of the devil. Let me give you a brief explanation of the people involved in this homicide and events that lead to the horrible night of May 26, 1896. Col. R. P. McGlincy, fifty-seven years old at the time, was born around the year 1839 in West Virginia. McClincy and his second wife lived in an orchard and farm south of the town of Campbell between the now present Winchester Roads and Bascom avenue. They lived in a two-story house with beautiful furnishings, which showed that they were part of a higher class and their culture. McClincy had a daughter by his wife's first marriage. She was Hattie Wells Dunham. Hattie was 26 years old and was happily married to James Dunham for a year. Together they had a three-month-old baby. Hattie was a graduate of San Jose State University, which was called San Jose State Normal back in the 1800's and early 1900's. It was said that Hattie's friends never understood why she picked James Dunham as her husband. It was rumored Hattie and James was going to separate. James Wells was Hattie's brother and stepson of Col. McGlincy was employed on the ranch where they lived. Minnie Shesler was 28 years old and was a maid of the McGlincy house. She was attached to Hattie like they were sisters. George Schaible and Robert Briscoe were hired men and also lived on the McGlincy ranch. James C. Dunham would be the murder of this murder mystery. Classmates of his would describe him as mentally retarded with no close friends. He was considered very lazy, did not dress properly, and very cheap. He was not

an alcoholic because one eyewitness testified at the coroner's said he was too stingy to buy any liquor. It was rumored because of a card game with the Colonel, the two of them had not spoken to each other for six weeks. A couple of weeks before the murders, James Dunham had attended night classes at Santa Clara school. He used a bicycle as a form of transportation to the school.

Dunham was seen riding his bicycle toward the McGlincy home from Santa Clara on the night of May 26, 1896. He arrived at the farmhouse at around 10 P.M. Mrs. McGlincy and Hattie Dunham were ready to go to bed at this time. Col. McGlincy, James Wells, and Robert Briscoe were attending a meeting of the American Protective Association (APA) in Campbell. This was an organization to a prominent religious sect. Dunham removed his shoes and quietly went up stairs to his wife's bedroom. They had been separated for a short period of time and pending a divorce. Dunham had carried an axe, but did not attack his wife with it. Hattie was found tied up, gagged, strangled, and with a dislocated neck. The baby was not harmed or disturbed at the time. A note was found on the bureau. The writing was said to be written by Hattie, but there was a belief that James Dunham had written it to throw off the investigators on who committed the murders. Minnie Shesler slept in an adjoining room. She was awoken by the noise and put on a wrapper to check out what all the noise was about. Dunham had been waiting for her and struck on the head with the ax, crushing her skull and then hitting her four more times while she was down. After killing Minnie Shesler, he had gone down stairs with the bloody axe in his hands. Mrs. McGlincy had waken up to check what the noise was about, but had suffered the same faith as Minnie Shesler. She was also brutally murdered

with the axe. Dunham was no longer a man, but a beast that preyed on innocent people, killing them with such brutality. Dunham knew it would be an hour before the men returned home, so he planned carefully on how to attack and kill the men. He had been searching for his 38 and 45 caliber weapons and all the ammunition he could find for the weapons. He had now nasty ways on how to kill the men. For some unknown reason, Dunham searched through all the family photo albums and took all the pictures of himself out of the albums. All but one had escaped him and was later on possessed by the Sheriff. It was said he took the pictures so if there were any witnesses of his crime they would not be able to identify him while he was on the run. When Dunham had completed his preparations to kill the men, it was said he sat down in the dark with his weapons, waiting for the men. Around 11 o'clock Dunham had heard the sound of wheels and knew the men were home. The Colonel, Wells, and Schaible were returning home and had no idea what horror they will be going through. Wells entered the house followed by the Colonel. Dunham allowed Wells to pass him while he stood behind the door. Then he struck the Colonel with the axe, landing a fatal blow on the left eye. Wells struggled with Dunham, but he was no match for a serial killer. Dunham struck Wells with the axe two times. Then he took his two firearms, and fired three shots with the 38 and two shots with the 45. The pistols were held so close, that the shots set Dunham's coat on fire. While the struggle with wells was going on, the Colonel got to his feet, climbed out the window, and ran toward the two-room cabin used by the hired men. Dunham had run out the door, but the Colonel had reached house and held the door shut. Dunham had passed Schaible

at the corner of the barn without noticing him. Schaible immediately climbed through a open window up into the loft in the barn and watched and heard the rest of the crime.

Dunham had shot several shots through the cabin door. L. C. Ross, a near by neighbor heard the shots and hid behind a palm tree. Dunham called the Colonel out and said he had to have him. The Colonel said not to shot because he had already two shots in him.

The Colonel said to Dunham to put his pistol down and he will come out. The Colonel didn't come out and Dunham fired more shots through the door. He opened the door and found the Colonel using a chair as a shield. Dunham shot a the Colonel and a bullet struck the Colonel in the heart. He walked thirty feet toward the barn and dropped dead.

Robert Briscoe, a hired man, had heard the commotion and tried to escape out of the back window. Dunham had heard the noise and rushed around the cabin, reloading his gun as he went. When Briscoe finally broke through the window, Dunham shot him twice,

killing Briscoe before he got ten feet. The three last murders were done in a matter of minutes. Dunham wasn't done with his killings. He wanted George Schaible. Dunham had been shouting 'George! George!', waiting for him to come out. He did not come out and hid under the loft, holding his breath. The baby and Schaible were the only lone survivors of the attack. Receiving no response from Schaible, he went back to the hired

men's cabin and lighting matches continued to hunt for the missing man. Finally he gave up the search, took a horse, and rode down the driveway. Charles Sterret was the first person to see Dunham after the murders. Dunham had asked Sterret where George was, but he did not know. Sterret then asked 'did you hear the commotion at the McGlincy place?' The Dunham said 'who was McGlincy?' It was nine o'clock the next morning

when Coroner Secord assembled a jury at the McGlincy home. Autopsies were preformed on the victims of the crimes giving clues how the fatal action involved and described. W. L. Woodrow made funeral arrangements in the Oak Hill Cemetery Pioneer Section. Sheriff Lyndon of Santa Clara started a massive search for Dunham in the Mount Hamilton area. Dunham has been seen on Mount Hamilton Road by the Smith Creek Hotel. The last time James Dunham was seen was at Parker's house asking for food and then rode toward Indian Gulch. For several days a search for the killer was on, but no signs of him was ever found. A popular belief was that Dunham went to a remote cave or canyon and committed suicide. For several months, suspects were arrested for the homicide because they resembled Dunham. They were later released and acquitted of all charges. Questions still go through people's minds. Why did Dunham murder all those people? Why didn't he kill his baby son? We will never know. All the answers lie in Dunham's soul. The victims multiple graves in Oak Hill Cemetery bears a prophetic warning. It says: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

"The Man with Wings"

John Joseph Montgomery was born in Yuba City, February 15, 1858. He was the second son of Zachary and Ellen Montgomery. John had three brothers and three sisters. When John was five years old and barely started his primary education, the Montgomery family moved to Oakland, California. John Montgomery's interest in aviation was dated back from his earliest childhood days. Ellen, his mother, saw his son one-day, playing with one small pillow under his stomach and flapping his arms as hard as he can, pretending he was a bird trying to fly. Clouds, floating in the sky with out any power

keeping the clouds in the air grew an interest to John. When John was eight years old, he would fly kites, often interrupting her to help him cut some pieces of paper or mix a pot of flour paste for his kite. John was excited when his neighbor told him stories of people flying in the air in hot air balloons. This is what he wanted to do. He wanted to fly in the air like in his neighbor's stories. In 1869, at the young age of eleven, he saw his first stream propelled balloon manned by Frederick Marriott at Shell Mound Park in Emeryville. He spent two weeks trying to make a duplicate model of the balloon with a basket and added wheels. In some unknown apparent reason he had made wings for himself, believing he would fly like the geese one day. He thought if they could fly why couldn't ^{he} do it too? His father had bought him a very popular toy during that time. It was a flying top with propeller blades, and with this toy he had learned it could lift heavier items than it with the use of the propeller. When he crossed the bay on ferryboats, he would examine the gulls in the air and their ability to glide, turn, and go up and down in the air without flapping their wings, overcoming the forces of gravity. That would lead him to some experiments on how this was possible. Besides the interest of aviation, his uncle taught John the basics of blacksmithing and working with metal. In 1874, John attended Santa Clara College with the interest of astronomy and aviation. Later he transferred to St. Ignatius College and received his Bachelor of Science Degree in 1879 and his Masters of Science in 1880. His father, Zachary Montgomery, retires after a successful career in Law, journalism, and politics. In 1881, he moved the family to Otay Valley in Southern California, John following the next year. He quickly set up his lab in

the barn of his Fruitland Ranch and continued doing his scientific experiments. His brothers and sisters were real excited about their brother's experiment and his little sister later on became his assistant in his experiments. She helped him with his plane models and other various types of experiments. John captured a vulture one-day and studied its wings, being more interested on how it flew and why can it fly. He found out the wings weighed twelve pounds, and by measuring its nine-foot wingspans and finding the surface area, John Montgomery could estimate the requirements of man in order to fly like the birds. With all these unusual experiments, John couldn't help himself from getting too much attention. The local towns' people and neighbors would say John was crazy trying to make a human fly in the sky like a bird. This hurt John, but it just encouraged himself more to fly and prove the towns' people wrong. It was before dawn, August 28, 1883, John and his brother James loaded their thirty-eight pound aircraft built from bamboo and wire into their hayrack-wagon. Not to attract any attention, they both carried rifles creating the allusion that they were off to a morning hunt. They headed to Wheeler Hill where it favored land breezes because it faced the San Diego Harbor. Carefully, John and his brother unloaded the wings with the wingspan of twenty feet. James stationed himself twelve to fourteen feet below the rim, holding a rope attached to the bottom of the glider. When John said go, James pulled the rope. John made a short run and jumped off the cliff, where he glided six hundred feet in the air and landing on his feet with the fragile glider in his arms when he landed. This was the very first time in history where man had made a controlled flight in the air, which it began the age of aviation, with neither John nor James realizing it. The Montgomery Brothers had

experienced history in the making. In 1894, John Montgomery taught mathematics at St. Joseph College in Rohnerville, California. Through his half cousin, George Montgomery, John obtained a part time teaching job in Santa Clara College. The college recognized his genius and provided John with a workshop to work on his experiments. James E. Leonard was interested in John's experiments and projects. Leonard invited John to perform his projects on his father's ranch near Aptos, which are now Manresa State Park and La Selva Beach. John was quick to accept the offer because he wanted to try out his tandem wing, three foot wing-spread models. On vacations and on their spare time, John and Leonard conducted many successful flights with two small models, the Pink Lady and Buzzard. Now John Montgomery was ready for full scale field experiments. For his experiments, he would use two aeroplane gliders, later called the Santa Clara and the California, both with 24 wing spans. Two 4x4 poles were attached and a cable was strung between them so that the plane as suspended ten to twelve feet off the ground. On ground level horses were used to tow the planes to achieve a running start. Helping John with the flights were Frank Hamilton and Daniel Maloney. Hamilton owned hot air balloons used for the release of parachutists and now used to release the Santa Clara and the California. Daniel Maloney was twenty five-year-old man who John Montgomery had chosen to train for his manned flights. On April 29, 1905, Montgomery decided to show his manned flights to the public. He invited college students, newspaper reporters, Archbishop Montgomery, and his mother. Space was cleared at the north east corner of Lafayette and Santa Clara Streets on the College campus to perform the manned flights.

A deep fire-pit was dug to supply the hot air for the hot air balloon and a forty-foot stovepipe to deflate the balloon. Men stood by with buckets of water just in case anything or anyone caught in fire. There were prayers and blessings for a safe landing and for everyone involved not to sustain any injuries. Maloney took a seat in the fuselage saddle and with a jerk the balloon rose up in the air. Daniel controlled the Santa Clara with ease, circling gracefully in one direction then another. A sudden downward dive left the crowd gasping for their safety, but Maloney quickly got the craft back to horizontal position. For fifteen minutes Maloney flew like a bird in the air. He landed safely on the ground without any injuries. After a successful flight, Montgomery decided to raise some money for further research. He chose the oval racetrack in the Fair Grounds to show his magnificent show. He charged twenty-five cents for adults and ten cents for children. He decided to fly both the California and Santa Clara. Newspaper publicity told of the amazing event. At the last minute, Hamilton asked for five hundred dollars in cash for the use of his hot air balloons. He also wanted to fly the aircraft and not Maloney. Right before the show started, the California was left unwatched and someone posing as one of Montgomery's mechanics loosened all the nuts and bolts. They tried the Santa Clara first of two flights. Something went wrong and only rose one hundred and fifty feet in the air and glided down. The crowd booed and demanded for their money back, so Montgomery heated another balloon and the California was brought up to the scene. Maloney got up on the California and flew it up. Montgomery shouted to fly the balloon die because the ropes were tangled. Maloney discovered his had bigger troubles than tangled ropes. All the nuts and bolts were loose and tried to tighten them with his fingers. Seeing that it was

use less, he followed Montgomery's orders and rode the balloon down and drifted thirty miles to Gilroy. They tried again in Santa Clara. They did their usual procedures and Maloney flew the plane. As the balloon rose, a rope gets tangled with the upper wing. Montgomery shouted to Maloney to ride the balloon down, but he didn't hear him. Maloney cut the rope loose at four thousand feet and only then discovered the fatal rope. He struggled to glide the plane down, but he died by impact. Montgomery was truly depressed and saddened of the loss of a partner, but most of all a friend. In 1910, Montgomery married Regina M. Cleary, who was a talented pianist and writer. She encouraged him to put an engine on the plane to give the plane better lifting power and distance. In October, 1911, Montgomery, his wife, and two of his mechanics a new base of operations. They had set up camp on the slope of the Ramonda Ranch in Evergreen Valley. For a takeoff, Montgomery laid a track down a hill slope. During October 17-31, Montgomery and Vierra made a total of fifty-five successful flights. Oversized stove bolts on the wing worried the expert mechanic, Reinhardt, because they are directly over the flyer's head. Montgomery said to leave them there because he might want to make some changes. When the air craft grew air born, the plane pointed upward Montgomery tried to control the plane, but at only thirteen feet, it stalled and crashed landed on its right wing, overturned. Montgomery had a small puncture on his left ear, but he had made his last flight. He had been killed by a forty-five cent stove bolt. John Montgomery had lived a great life, but his life was cut short because of a forty-five cent stove bolt.

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