

Historical characters of the North Shore

By Pat Dillon, Moonshine Ink

The early years of the white man's exploration and settlement of the Tahoe Basin provided many examples of eccentric characters. The more famous of these, such as Mark Twain and Pretty Boy Floyd, have been well-documented. I'm intrigued, however, by a lesser-known character from our neighborhood.

James Stewart – alias James McLaughlin – was well known as a timber faller in the late 1800s. It was said he could take down two trees in the time it took lesser men to fall one. He was also known to be a hot-tempered gunslinger when drinking – which he often did.

On Oct. 27, 1874, he mounted his horse at his camp at Lonely Gulch near Rubicon Peak and rode for Tahoe City to quench his thirst. Tying his horse in front of the Grand Central Hotel where Commons Beach is today, he stomped down to the Custom House bar on the wharf. Barkeep Fred A. Scott was serving a few happy regulars, but the bar became quiet at Stewart's entrance and most patrons wandered back up to the Grand Central where they might drink in peace.

Read the whole story