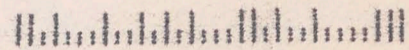


KERMIT D. MATTHEWS  
377 NORTH CATHERINE PARK DRIVE  
GLENORA, CALIFORNIA 91740



Mr. and Mrs. Lee Sparks  
40704 Robin Street  
Fremont, California 94538



Mrs. KERMIT D. MATTHEWS  
377 NORTH CATHERINE PARK DRIVE  
GLENORA, CALIFORNIA 91740

August 27, 1986

Dear Patty and Lee,

The letters which you so kindly allowed the Williamson County Genealogical Society to print have now appeared in their quarterly, and I thought you might be interested in seeing how they appeared. Also, I think I overlooked the article about Elnora Knight's grandmother when I sent you the other pertinent material from their recently published history of Williamson County. The McNutts seem to be one of the very early settlers in that area - even more so that the Knights (1847) or the Sparks (1857). The third paper is the copy of the article about your grandfather that I found in my mother's scrapbook. I hope you will find these things interesting.

We are sorry our vacations coincided so that we could not see you again. Hope yours was a good one. We enjoyed ours.

Sincerely,

*Mary Matthews*

From Irene Knight Armitage (Mrs. Robert F.) Lake Placid Club,  
P.O.Box 681, Essex County, New York  
May 29, 1947

To:- Mrs. Maud Mackenzie, Box 693, Carmel, California.-May 28, 1947,

1st, 2nd, last name: Maud \_\_\_\_\_ ? \_\_\_\_\_ (maiden?)

Full birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Full marriage date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

his- 1st, 2nd, last name: \_\_\_\_\_ Mackenzie,

his-Full birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

his-Full deathdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

his-Father's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

his-Mother's full name: \_\_\_\_\_ (maiden)

Full names of your children, with dates, places, marriages, issue, residences, etc.

your- Father's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

your- Mother's full name: \_\_\_\_\_ (maiden)

Full marriage date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

his- Full birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

his- Full deathdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

her- Full birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

her- Full deathdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's full name: \_\_\_\_\_ (maiden)

need above parents of person who was not a Knight- see over for this Knight  
Father's residence & occupation; \_\_\_\_\_

Brothers and Sisters, full names, dates and places, residences, etc.  
More space over:-

David had another wife - mar. date ? \_\_\_\_\_ where ? \_\_\_\_\_  
her full maiden name ? \_\_\_\_\_  
her full birth date ? \_\_\_\_\_ place \_\_\_\_\_  
her full death date ? \_\_\_\_\_ place \_\_\_\_\_  
her parent's names ??

Grandfather's name: David Fortner Knight,

Grandmother's name: Susanna ? Hayworth,

Full marriage date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

his- Full birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

his- Full deathdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

her- Full birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

her- Full deathdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

His parent's Names: James Knight and Martha (Seals) (Smalley)

Her parent's Names: \_\_\_\_\_

His residence & occupation: Doctor, at- \_\_\_\_\_

Record of your Knight Uncles and Aunts, also names and address that I may inquire.  
note - 1850 Census for Williamson County, Texas (no town given)

David F. Knight, age 41, born Ohio, Physician, \$2100.00

Susanna Knight, age 36, born Ohio,

Benjamin Knight, age 10, born Ill.

Maria L. Knight, age 8, born Ill.

George H. Knight, age 6, born Ill,

John S. Knight, age 2, born Ill,

Will you please give all possible full records on the above ? also about any other children they may have had. Names and address of grandchildren of David F.

Note- David F. Knight, died 9-29-1887, Probate file 451, Williamson Co. Texas. but I do not have abstract of the probate.

Do you know the parents and ancestry for above James Knight, your great-grandfather ?

Can you tell me anything about this John and family - he was brother of your David Fortner Knight.

John's children would be 1st cousins to your Knight parent

The census give wife as Hannah but gravestone of their son Eli Knight gives parents as John & Keren Knight

1850 Census, Williamson County, Texas - no town given.

John Knight,	age 46, born Ohio, Farmer, \$2400.00	(born about 1804)
Hannah Knight,	age 44, born Ohio,	(born about 1806)
William Knight,	age 20, born Ind.	(born about 1830)
Ruth E. Knight,	age 17, born Ill.	(born about 1833)
Martha Knight,	age 15, born Ill,	(born about 1835)
Eli Knight,	age 8, born Ill,	(born about 1842)

in Old Cemetery at Georgetown Texas - are -

John S. Knight, born April 29, 1803, died Sept. 4, 1870. (above John)

Eli Knight, born April 18, 1842, died Oct. 8, 1862,  
son of John and Keren Knight,

Do you know the name and address for any grandchild of above John ?

The above is all I have on John and family, but would like to contact his descendants.

DESCENDANTS OF WILLIAM SPARKS (1761-1848), continued:

probably about 1818. She died on February 22, 1881, in Bell County, Texas, and was buried in the Belton Cemetery. She and James had five children.

1. Elizabeth McAnulty, daughter of James and Sarah (Sparks) McAnulty, was born on September 30, 1820, in Mississippi. She married John Yancy on June 12, 1837, in Nacogdoches County, Texas. She died in 1898 in Bell County.
2. James McAnulty, Jr.
3. Mary McAnulty.
4. Matilda McAnulty.
5. Richard McAnulty.

C. John Sparks, son of William and Mary (Fielder) Sparks, was born about 1804 in Georgia. He was a small lad when his parents moved to Mississippi. It was there, in Lawrence County, that he was married to Joanna Parkman on December 22, 1825, by Abel Stringer, a justice of the peace. Joanna was probably a daughter of Joseph and Susannah Parkman. She apparently died sometime before 1850. John died sometime after 1854. They had two children.

1. James Sparks, son of John and Joanna (Parkman) Sparks, was born about 1827 in Mississippi. On September 20, 1849, he was married to Lucinda J. Reed in Rusk County, Texas. She had been born about 1828 in Alabama. James died sometime prior to 1885 and was buried on Medio Creek in Bee County, Texas. Lucinda died on July 9, 1907, in Live Oak County. They were the parents of four children.

a. Thomas Bennett Sparks, son of James and Lucinda (Reed) Sparks, was probably born about 1851. He married Lucy Pottridge probably about 1875, and they had ten children. Thomas died on January 25, 1902, and Lucy died on January 27, 1913. They were buried in Live Oak County, Texas.

- (1) Carrie May Sparks married G. S. Wilson and they lived in Visalia, California.
- (2) Albert Sparks lived at Three Rivers, Texas.
- (3) Clinton L. Sparks lived at Callihan, Texas.
- (4) Alta Sparks was born on July 8, 1888. She married R. L. Laster on Christmas Day, 1911. They lived at Westoff, Texas.
- (5) Stanley Sparks was born on January 14, 1890. He married Vivian Jones and they lived at Callihan, Texas.
- (6) Mittie Sparks was born on March 20, 1892. She married (1st) G. S. Draper on Christmas Day, 1910, and (2nd) R. L. Reed on November 28, 1928.
- (7) Russell Sparks was born on March 11, 1894. On April 21, 1923, he was married to Ethel Cox in Lone Oak County.
- (8) Herman Sparks was born on May 1, 1896. He was married to Genevieve Abernathy on February 14, 1921.
- (9) Annie Ola Sparks was married to Winton White on January 19, 1920, in Live Oak County.
- (10) John Lloyd Sparks was married to Lillian Jones on December 1, 1922, in Live Oak County.

X Bobby Christean

X

DESCENDANTS OF WILLIAM SPARKS (1761-1848), continued:

- b. Mary Alice Sparks, daughter of James and Lucinda (Reed) Sparks, was probably born about 1855. In 1882, she married Curtis Herring, and they had five children. She died about 1928.
- c. John Bailey Sparks, son of James and Lucinda (Reed) Sparks, was born on March 25, 1858. He married Sarah Eliza Claunch on November 19, 1882, in Live Oak County. They moved to Douglas County, Oregon, about 1909. Sarah died at Oakland, Oregon, on March 13, 1935, and John died there on January 10, 1938. They were the parents of fourteen children.
- (1) Isabelle Sparks was born on September 10, 1883. She married Tom Shone on Christmas Eve, 1902, in McMullen County, Texas.
  - (2) Grover Cleveland Sparks was born on November 10, 1884. He married Maud Goodman on November 14, 1912, in Douglas County, Oregon.
  - (3) Etta Sparks was born on March 13, 1886. She married Thomas Wallace on June 27, 1906, in Live Oak County, Texas.
  - (4) Rosie Sparks was born on September 22, 1877. She died on February 22, 1890.
  - (5) Bettie Sparks was born on January 19, 1889. She married Seth Clarke on April 23, 1911, in Douglas County, Oregon. She died on December 24, 1916.
  - (6) Eliza Myrtle Sparks was born on October 28, 1890. She married A. S. Murphy on December 27, 1926.
  - (7) James Jefferson Sparks was born on January 6, 1894. He died on August 19, 1899.
  - (8) Thomas Bailey Sparks was born on August 24, 1896. He married Peggy Yost on June 17, 1919, in Portland, Oregon.
  - (9) Vada Sparks was born on September 12, 1898. She married Lester Crow.
  - (10) Viola Sparks was born on September 11, 1900. She never married.
  - (11) Frank L. Sparks was born on June 2, 1903. He married Lucile Fortin on June 2, 1929, in Douglas County, Oregon.
  - (12) Leo Sparks was born on March 15, 1905. He married Ella Moore on December 14, 1930, in Douglas County, Oregon.
  - (13) Mary Melonee Sparks was born on October 14, 1906. She died on November 30, 1906.
  - (14) John Alton Sparks was born on June 27, 1908. He died on February 26, 1927, in Coos County, Oregon. He never married.
- d. Susan Rebecca Sparks, daughter of James and Lucinda (Reed) Sparks, was born on March 8, 1860. She married Lockhart H. Claunch on October 31, 1882, in Live Oak County, Texas. He was born on July 23, 1860, at Pleasanton, Texas. Susan died in April 1918 at El Paso, Texas, and was buried in the Evergreen Cemetery. She and Lockhart had six children.
- (1) Hannah Claunch was born on December 11, 1884. She married William Tolbert on December 10, 1907. She died on April 19, 1934.
  - (2) James Jefferson Claunch was born on March 22, 1887. He married Verda Neff.
  - (3) Jourdan Claunch was born on May 9, 1889.
  - (4) Burl Claunch was born on July 3, 1892. He died in the spring of 1899/1900.
  - (5) Floyd E. Claunch was born on November 13, 1896. He married (1st) Erva Adams and (2nd) Mary Herring.
  - (6) Charles Hart Claunch was born on March 8, 1900.

She was born  
in ~~Sparks~~ 1857  
M 6404  
Helen Elnora Knight  
Sparks on her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday

377 North Catherine Park Drive  
Glendora, California 91740  
August 25, 1986

Dear Helen,

Kermit and I had a delightful time visiting with you again, seeing your pictures, hearing your organ and your interesting anecdotes about the Sparks family. After we got back to the motel, I wrote them down. I am enclosing a copy. Would you mind checking it to see if I remembered the facts correctly? We feel so much better acquainted with the John Sparks family now.

After we got back to the motel, I began wondering about your father-in-law Benton Hackett Sparks. You mentioned that he did not go to college. What was his profession? Then I was wondering about Charles. Was he able to work or did his accident prevent that?

When I got home, I dived into my collection of Sparks Family Quarterlies to see what I could find out about our relationship to Elaine. I didn't find it there, but our mutual friend Helen McKee tells me that they (including Elaine) are descended from Joseph Sparks, son of William Sparks who came to this country in 1663. Our family is descended from Joseph's older brother John. So the relationship is there, though not a very close one. There are men named Benton in that family - seemingly named after William H. Benton who was a senator in Mississippi. I would suspect that John Sparks had a friend named Benton Hackett for whom your father in law was named, but of course that is merely a supposition on my part.

Some time ago, Abbott asked me to summarize the background Sparks information we have prior to John Sparks. I thought you might be interested in knowing it, so I am enclosing a copy. This spring a book was published by the Williamson County Genealogical Association containing articles submitted by various members. I noticed articles about Major Robert McNutt and his wife Mary Jackson McNutt. They are Elnora Knight Sparks' maternal grandparents, so I am enclosing copies of those articles too. He apparently played quite an important part in Texas history.

It was a treat seeing you again. Do keep in touch.

Cordially,

Mary Waukeens

Benton Hackett Sparks

Information from Mrs. Benton Knight Sparks, August, 1986

Benton Haskett Sparks's wife, Miriam Eads, died in the flu epidemic of 1918. After her death, neither he nor his mother, Elnora Knight Sparks felt they could cope with his three sons, John, Benton and Alfred, and their aunt, Maude Sparks McKenzie, stepped in to take care of them. Maude Sparks McKenzie was a very interesting person whose life would probably make a good book. Her husband, <sup>James</sup> A. McKenzie was an attorney, son of a minister. Maude had spent a great deal of time in Europe because her father, John Sparks, considered the ranch frontier no place for a young lady. She was an artist, both a painter and a sculptor. The McKenzies had a mansion which she had designed near the ocean at Pebble Beach, California. ~~A. J. J. A.~~ McKenzie ~~died~~ during the depression, and she was not able to keep the home although she did keep some of the property around it. She moved to another home they owned in Carmel - an adobe which was the oldest house in Carmel. In her later years she was something of a recluse and, as her mind deteriorated became very peculiar. She kept many cats and, at one time, had a possum in a cage. Her nephew Benton and her niece Nancy (Leland's daughter) looked after her when she became unable to manage her affairs. At one point she felt she needed some money and sold one of her valuable ocean front lots in Pebble Beach to an unscrupulous real estate agent for \$12,000. Benton was able to have the man barred from further real estate deals, but nothing could be done to regain the lot. One time when Benton and Helen went to see her, she was having a wonderful time with a magnifying glass watching the termites working on her house. When she died many treasures were mixed in with much junk. Among them were some valuable paintings and seventeen barrels of valuable china, *which has been in storage for years.*

She was quite interested in her three charges, John, Benton and Alfred. Benton was about twelve years old when his mother died, John a little older and Alfred seven years younger. She sent them all to a military boarding school. When John graduated, she sent him to Oxford, but he was not Oxford material and did not do well there. Because Benton was not an artist, she did not want to send him to Europe to school, and he went to Stanford where he met his future wife, Helen Honnold. Helen's father was a very strict a Methodist. When Ben requested his permission to marry Helen, he inquired about Ben's relationship to a certain John Sparks, who was reputed to take a keg of beer on all of his hunting parties. Ben told him that John Sparks could not possibly have been his grandfather because his grandfather drank nothing but whiskey.

As a young man, <sup>at college</sup> Benton wanted to work on a ship that went through the Panama Canal. Auntie Maude was not at all in favor of this expedition, but Uncle Jim (her husband) persuaded her that it would be a good experience for him. So she bought him a sailor suit and sent him a steamer basket from one of San Francisco's exclusive stores when he embarked. Of course all of this greatly embarrassed the young man who was trying to prove himself with the rough tough seamen. The sailor suit was never worn, and the steamer basket was pushed as far as possible under

100

former for 2 years



his bunk.

Benton was in personnel work with Libby and McNeil. Alfred was an architect and designed the World War II Memorial over the Arizona in Pearl Harbor. Neither John, Benton nor Alfred had children of their own, but Alfred adopted the children of his second wife who was an ~~Oriental woman~~. *only part Oriental - (Her father*

*later notes*

*Irish, English & Scotch  
her mother from  
Chicago - prominent  
family.*

Leland was a car salesman. His daughter, Nancy, worked her way through the University of California at Berkeley and then joined the WAVES. After World War II, she earned the master's degree from Stanford and worked in counseling at San Francisco State ~~University~~ where she married her boss, Fred ~~Huniston~~. He had a "bachelor pad" on a beautiful lot in Sausalito to which they have added through the years. Their view is magnificent.

*City*

*College*

Leland, Jr. refused to go to college. He met his wife Patricia Clarcken when he was in the marines stationed in San Diego. He has insisted that all of his children have at least two years of college, and they all have. Lee and Patty have eight children and eighteen grandchildren, with two more on the way.

Helen Sparks has a beautiful carved four poster bed that belonged to Benton Hackett Sparks' grandfather who was a surgeon in the Confederate Army (Dr. David Knight?). They also have some of his medical instruments. When Teddy Roosevelt visited John Sparks, he slept in this bed.

*in Reno Nevada*

High Road of the West  
1943 Dale L. Morgan

In the summer and fall of 1885 I got well acquainted with John Sparks. The firm was Sparks & Tinnin and they operated in Nevada. That summer we bought 3,000 steers from them. The two-year-olds cost \$27 and the threes \$35 delivered at Rawlins and Rock Creek, Wyoming. Sparks, who had come from Texas, was a man whom you would notice in any crowd. He was tall, straight as a pine tree, a clear flashing eye that seemed to look right through you, and while somewhat deliberate in his movements he was full of energy. He had wonderful knowledge of the cow business. Trained in Texas, he had seen all sides of the business, and at the time we write of he was apparently riding on the flood tide of success. All his argosies had reached port. A couple of years more and things began to go wrong. Low prices, winter losses, distance from market made it hard sledding in the cattle business; and the firm seemed to lose out year by year. How their cattle schemes finished up I never found out, although I used to run up against both of the partners in late years.

Meanwhile Sparks had drifted into politics, mining, and purebred cattle. You can dump a lot of money into holes of that kind. If you are honest you are sure to lose in politics; in mining it is ten to one against you; and the purebred business was at a low ebb, very different from the speculative era of 1915-16. In his adopted state he reached the governorship, the best that Nevada could give him. They say he played the part well, but when he died a few years ago he left nothing tangible but his good name, after a strenuous and industrious life. People called him a plunger and in a sense he was. He went into big deals, he backed up his judgment and went straight ahead, never dreaming of defeat; or, in other words, when he crossed his Rubicon he burned his boats. While he had some of the ordinary traits and habits of the Western cattle owner, which he came to by inheritance and association, he had high ideals. He ventured into the wilderness of public life without any training, and when his late business ventures were unsuccessful there was nothing left. What would have been the result if he had settled down once again in the business he knew so well, followed the path that found so many of the old cowmen torn, rent, bankrupt in the spring of 1887, today prosperous themselves, or of those who have gone leaving comfort and affluence to their families? But it is the spirit of Sparks that has made the West: this devil-may-care, somewhat reckless feeling which carries you forward, across raging streams, over arid plains, up mountain valleys and steep canyons, turning your hand or your brain to a thousand tasks, casting your bread upon the waters. It is not so much individual success as the great collective effort that makes the big roundup, and the flashes of genius that come from men of the Sparks temperament, concentrating, churning in the mill, or rushing over the dam, but all driving toward one end, that build up new countries.

THE HUMBOLDT

HIGHROAD OF THE WEST

BY

DALE L. MORGAN

1943

Through the early sixties cattlemen herded stock along the bottoms of the Walker, the Carson, the Truckee, and the northern creeks. Nevada's cattle era, however, began with the Humboldt's cattle era--with the appearance of the longhorns which in 1866 began the famous trail drives north from Texas.

The longhorns came first to the ranges of Montana and Wyoming, but quickly the dust of their passing eddied westward. The Mormons remained indifferent to them, and the Mormon range history is barren of their wild glamour, but the longhorns were welcomed in the Humboldt Valley. John Sparks, a Mississippi-born Texan who later became governor of Nevada, has been credited with driving in a herd in 1868. The longhorn was a good rustler and could take care of itself; it fattened well on the Nevada ranges, and brought a good price in California slaughterhouses. Ranches spread in the country which until then had belonged to the Indian.

These cattlemen were hard-handed, straight-thinking fighters, far more independent and belligerent than the miners.

The cattlemen had this ease of manner, this grace of informality. Railroad money could buy an efficient opposition in a state more corrupt than any in the Union, and mining was too chaotic in its ups and downs, its frenzies and its collapses, to present a stable front. But the range barons won friends; and they stayed with the land and drew strength from it.

I don't quite know how the idea of this program originated, for for that matter any program that would involve me...probably in Mabel Dalstrom's car enroute to a PEO meeting when something was said about Nevada and I unfortunately entered the conversation. The next thing I knew Bernice asked me last spring if I would tell a little about early Nevada and the part my husband's grandfather played in it at one of the meetings "next year". In a weak moment and because "next year" seemed a long time away, I agreed. But I certainly won't talk at length and only try to summarize some of the highlights of that period in Nevada history in which John Sparks, later to become Nevada's governor, lived.

Quite a bit has been written about him - probably because he helped build the cattle industry in Nevada and because he was a colorful and somewhat controversial figure during his time. There have been chapters in books about him, various articles in magazines and newspapers - nothing in chronological order, so I'll have to make do with the few clippings and documents my husband happened to have.

He was born in a wagon train in Mississippi enroute from Maryland to Texas in 1843. While he was a small boy, his family moved to Lampasas, Texas, a good place for a boy to become interested in cattle. When he was only 14 years of age, he decided to raise cattle on his own and even at that early age he had enough savvy to be successful. In his very early youth he conducted three cattle drives from Texas to Canada, usually taking about three months each way. He had many adventures and hardships on these drives - on his return to Texas from one of his cattle drives, his group had become scattered and he and a companion encountered a severe winter storm in Nebraska. The two of them spent some time in a sod hut they had to construct. On another occasion after they had made camp at night, there was a barrage of arrows and they discovered they were in Indian territory. They quickly moved on and disaster was averted. When only 19 he joined the Frontier Regiment, which was organized by the governor of Texas to fight Indian depredations - he fought four years with the Texas rangers until 1865 - and up to the end of the Civil War. During this time he became an excellent marksman and it is said if anyone tossed a silver dollar in the air, he could hit it. One little incident is written about him - at the end of the Civil War, a group of young confederate soldiers were celebrating the return of some of their friends from the war. While the party was in full swing, a group of northern soldiers came upon them. Fighting ensued and at the conclusion a young John Sparks was the chief target for punishment. He was chained to a tree for 30 days and severely beaten.

But to go on - during the cattle drives he made he realized that there were even wider spaces in the big unconquered west, especially into Nebraska and Wyoming and in 1868 he and a partner by the name of John Tinnin struck out for Wyoming and began to build a cattle domain there. When he arrived in Wyoming he brought with him five young negro lads, who had been freed from slavery. These boys were in their teens - this wasn't long after the civil war and of course these boys were sons of former slaves. One of the five several years later - his name was Henry Harris - became the foreman of one of his largest ranches in Nevada - the San Jacinto - which extended to the Idaho line. He died at the age of 82 and at the time of his death - many articles were written about him. I wish I could have found one of them. Another of the five became the family butler in later years, staying with the family until his death. A third stayed on another of the ranches and two went to San Francisco to establish to establish one of the first red-cap stations. During his residency in Wyoming he still retained his cattle interests in Texas. In 1875 while he was living in Cheyenne, an outbreak of the Cheyenne and Sioux Indians occurred. At that time Governor Thayer, the territorial governor, gave him a captain's commission, with guns, ammunition etc to protect the settlers.

Meanwhile the news of Nevada's nutritious native grasses and seemingly endless ranges reached his ears and realizing the opportunity, he and Mr. Tinnin purchased ranges and ranches in Elko county in the early 1880's and were eying the holding of their competitor, who ranged the area from the headwaters of the Columbia to those of Humboldt and the Salt Lake basin.

Barley Harold

2  
In 1883 they persuaded him to sell at the round figure of \$900,000, and with this transaction they organized a company valued at a million dollars. Their range then extended from the Snake River in Idaho to Pilot Peak in eastern Elko County and to the summit of the Salmon River range, a territory equal in size to the states of Connecticut, Delaware, Rhode Island and half of New Jersey. Their cattle were running on Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho and Nevada ranges and carried more than a dozen irons or brands. One time when Teddy Roosevelt was in the west, he came to see the cattle and asked Mr. Sparks to estimate the number of cattle he owned, and he merely replied, "We leave these matters to the assessor and he comes around once a year" - It is an unwritten law that a cattleman never talks of the size of his herd. In an article in Life Magazine in 1949 (April) there is a story about Elko, Nevada and to quote "some of the ranches established in Elko County were enormous. Up in the northeast end of the county were the holdings of John Sparks and Frank Tinnan, both former Texans, who drove their herds of wild Texas longhorns to Nevada shortly after the Civil War. Their steers ranged over three million acres in all. In the winter of 1885, the firm branded 38,000 calves, indicating a total holding of 150,000 cattle. John Sparks was the dominant member of the firm, a 6 foot 4 inch giant, who rode the range with his buckaroos and waged unrelenting war on the encroaching shepherders. But the hard winter of 1889-90, in which some Nevada cattlemen lost as high as 90% of their herds, reduced their holdings by perhaps 50,000 head. But they didn't win their spurs sitting on the fences and recovered to come back stronger than ever. John Tinnin later sold his half interest back to Mr. Harrell and the firm became Sparks-Harrell and two of their brands, the Winecup and Shoesole became famous over the western states.

These statistics about the scope and size of his cattle interests give a little background before relating an interesting story about which much has been written. A long standing feud had existed for years between the cattlemen and the sheepmen of Nevada and southern Idaho and finally brought about one of the most celebrated criminal cases in the U.S. courts - at least up to that period. In this particular case the victims were shepherders and the accused a cow-puncher, to use the western phrase. For years there had been disputes as to the rights of the range. Such was the condition on the 17th of February 1896 when the bodies of John C. Wilson and Daniel Cummings were found near Deep Creek. Upon the instructions of the District Attorney the case was investigated and in 1897 Fred T. Gleason and Jack Davis were brought to trial. Gleason was acquitted but Diamond-field Jack Davis as he was called was found guilty of murder and sentenced to be hanged. The case was tried in Boise, as the crime was supposed to have taken place over the Idaho line. The prosecution was conducted by J.C. Rogers and the assistant prosecuting attorney, a young man by the name of W. E. Borah. Diamond-field Jack was an employee of John Sparks, who believed in his innocence and before the trial was over the most talented legal aid was involved. John Spark engaged Clarence Darrow and it was reported that he spent over \$40,000 of his own money on the defense. Three times during the five years a death sentence was commuted. The last time he appeared before the board of pardons in 1899 and during this hearing, James E. Bower and Jeff Gray appeared before them and admitted to the crime for which Davis was sentenced to hang. This evidence gave the third commutation but he had to await the trial of Bower and Gray. But the time it was concluded the statute of limitations had expired <sup>because according</sup> ~~by 10 days~~ <sub>release had to be made within 10 days after sentence</sub> for releasing him and his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Jack Davis wrote a letter to the Capital News "I have every hope of getting justice for my innocence is so plain that I don't see how people can fail to recognize it, but I may get worsted. And if anyone thinks I am guilty that has the decision in their hands then let them vote to hang me, and if they think otherwise let them vote to acquit me and do me justice. I want no commute. I am not looking for mercy, I am looking for justice. If I cannot get it, I want no compromise. After four years more (he served 9 years in all) he was finally released - pardoned but never acquitted. But many defects in the law were brought to light during this trial and were finally corrected. It seems they had provisions for putting people in prison but no provision for letting them out. Much has been written about the injustice of this trial and the courts were severely criticized because he was pardoned but never legally acquitted. A book was written about the life of "Diamondfield Jack" and in later life he called on Ben's grandmother, then living in San Francisco at the age of 95. She told us of the visit and called him a rattle brained braggard.

*In 1949, Life Magazine carried a story about this famous trial*

~~I'll read a couple of paragraphs from the article in life.....~~

This of course was entirely inaccurate and if the reporter had taken the time or effort to delve into the records, he could have given the true story of this famous trial.

One little interesting sidelight - during the period when perhaps his cattle empire was the largest, Death Valley Scotty and his brother Warner were in his employ. Few of Death Valley's associated had much respect for him - thought he was an imposter, an opinion which even his brother shared. Warner was highly respected and well liked. Perhaps many of you remember the old movie star, Ruth Rolland. When she was very small, a youngster from a poor and ignorant background, Warner took an interest in her, realizing that she had unusual talent. He educated her and promoted her to stardom.

Perhaps because of the hardships and his advancing age, he sold all his range herds to Mr. Harrell for \$500,000 in cash, plus 12,000 acres of land in the Texas cotton belt, and came to reside on the Reno ranch, known as the Alamo stock farm. This is now five miles out of town on Virginia Street. Many years later after his death, prior to which he had suffered great financial losses due to low cattle prices and a severe depression in the cattle industry, the Alamo was sold for \$18,000.00. About four years ago this property was sold for \$445,000, a frightening example of what inflation has done in not too many years.

Just one more bit about the part he played in building the cattle industry in Nevada. After he moved to the Alamo and sold his extensive range herds, he decided to devote his time to promoting purebred Herefords. Never to do things in a small way, he imported stock from England and one article said that his greatest monument was his early contribution to the purebred influence among Nevada's cattle. His home contained two large cases of trophies and medals won by his show herd in competition throughout the west. His breeding stock was sold throughout the United States and he exported to the Kukaian Plantation Company in 1901 the first Herfords to reach Hawaii.

*Quoting from the Nevada records.*

In 1902 he was persuaded by friends to do into politics and he also wanted to accomplish some of the things he believed in. That year he was elected Governor on a fusion ticket and was referred to as "honest John" and a Silver Democrat. Never before had a Governor been so aggressive in pushing what might be called Nevada's first "New Deal". Both parties had sponsored him and he was only opposed by the Cleveland Democrats. First he put over an 8 hour day for miners and he abolished the vicious practice of compelling miners to trade in a particular store or buy supplies from a specific company. Third, he put over Nevada's first Irrigation Act. Fourth, he created the office of State Engineer and fifth, and in a sense the greatest of all, he established the Nevada Railroad Commission. This regulated railroad rates. In 1907 a violent strike broke out in the gold mines at Goldfield. This was largely promoted by the IWWs - a radical element in the labor movement. To maintain order, he appealed to President Roosevelt for troops. He went with the militia, riding on his horse, and ordered the IWWs to leave town or go to work. Agitation for the recall of the troops led his calling a special session of the legislature in May of 1908. Here he won legislative support to request the Federal Government to retain the troops in the gold-fields to prevent bloodshed.

Shortly after, worn out from overwork and worry, he fell victim to pneumonia and died in August of that year. (1908). He is buried in Mt/ View Cemetery in Reno where a bronze bust modeled by his daughter, stands atop a tall pillar to mark his grave. He is also enshrined in Oklahoma City Hall of Fame of great westerners, and the town of Sparks is named for him.