

**THE OUTLAW SAGA**  
**OF**

**JAMES**

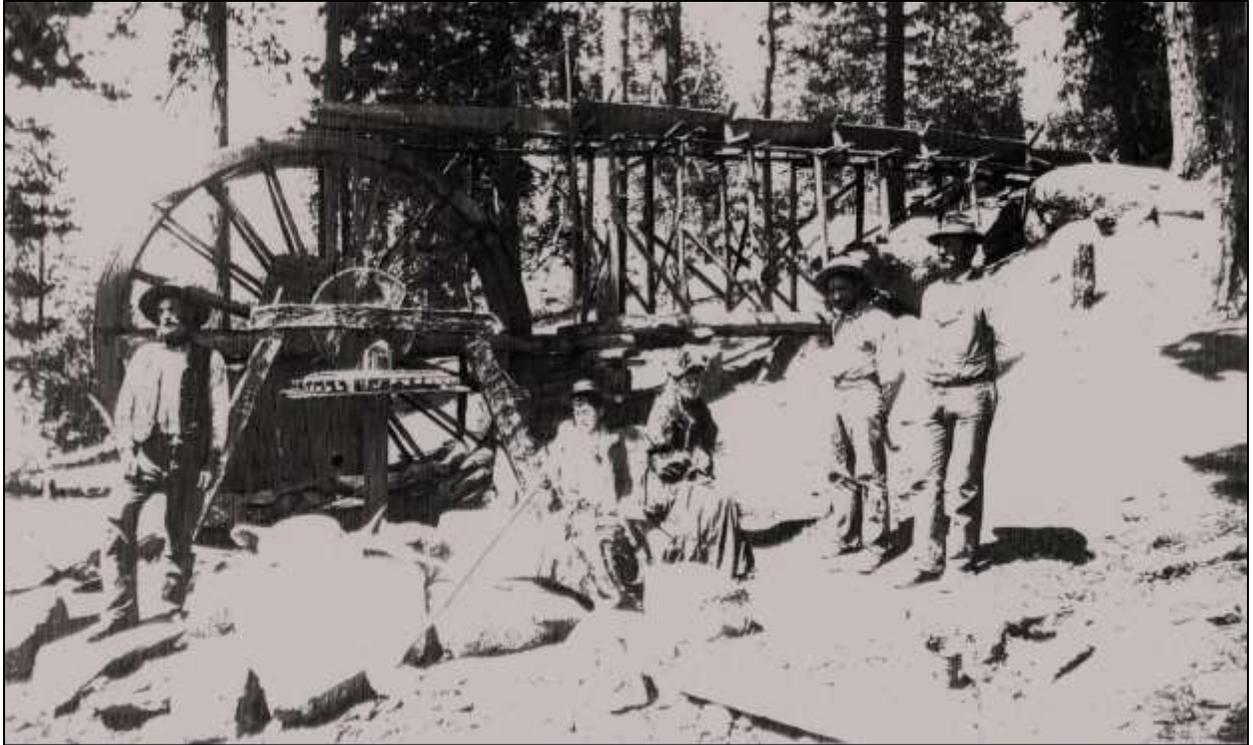
**“MORMON JIMMY”**

**LAWSON**



**THE MADERA COUNTY DESPERADO**  
**OF 1894-1895**

by  
Steve Marsh  
Sierra National Forest  
2014

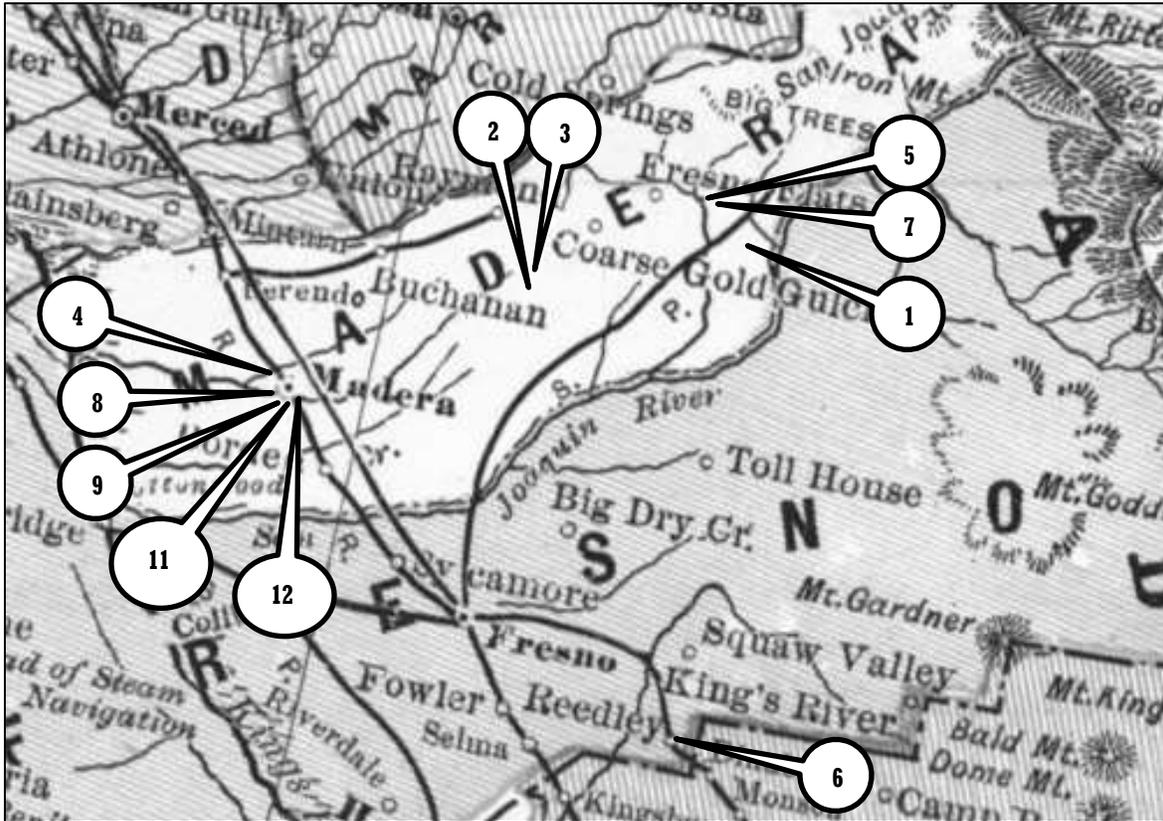


Pine Grove Mine, Madera County, California:

Three men (standing) and two women (seated) are in front of a wooden water flume, its supporting trestle, a water wheel, and arrastra for crushing ore. James "Mormon Jimmy" Lawson is the shortest man, second from right. He owned the mine, but the other men may have been partners. The woman in the middle closest to James Lawson is probably Mary Christina, Lawson's wife.

This photograph (copy) was donated to the Sierra National Forest by Glenn A. Green in 1999.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



Chicago: George F. Cram, 1898; from *Cram's Universal Atlas, Geographical, Astronomical and Historical*

1. **Murder Under the Moon** (Lawson Ranch, Cascadel).
2. **More Gunshots in the Night** (Dance Hall, Bellview Station).
3. **Revenge** (Kennedy's House, Bellview Station).
4. **An Unexpected Opportunity for Vengeance** (Madera County Jail).
5. **A Bloody Encounter** (Goode's Ranch, North Fork).
6. **Desperate, Soaked and Shoeless** (Strelow's Farm, Reedley).
7. **The Danger of a Square Meal** (Noddin's Homestead, North Fork).
8. **Oh, Forgive Me!** (Madera County Jail).
9. **Loose Bricks** (Madera County Jail).
10. **News is Not All Good** (Plymouth, Amador County).
11. **Trial and Tribulation** (Madera).
12. **But the Law Won** (Madera).
13. **Postscript and Author's Note**
14. **Newspaper Articles**

# The Outlaw Saga of James “Mormon Jimmy” Lawson

**O**n a moonlit night in late summer of 1894, a fateful act took place. It may have been a premeditated act, and many said it was, or it may have been a spontaneous reaction. Nonetheless, the shocking foulness of the deed left a family in tatters and awash in blood, and brought the eyes of California onto a small part of the Madera and Fresno County foothills as a desperate saga of criminality played out over the next year. That one act set off a chain of events that earned a man named James “Mormon Jimmy” Lawson an infamous place in California history.

## Murder Under the Moon

James Lawson was a homesteader and a miner, and the man who had acted that moonlit night. He had come from Utah with his family, acquiring the local nickname “Mormon Jimmy”, and built a homestead on 160 acres near Saginaw Creek and east of Castle Peak in the foothills of Madera County. His income was derived from mining gold at his Pine Grove Mine, where he worked diligently, building a waterwheel-driven arrastra and digging tunnels into the hillside. His busy life providing for his family’s subsistence left him little time for being with his wife and children, and that’s where the trouble started, at least in his mind.

For some time, Lawson suspected that a neighbor, Sam Dalton, an older bachelor man and hired hand on a ranch not far away, had been paying undue attention to his wife. This suspected infidelity caused marital strife, to be sure, but it was compounded by Lawson in reported threats he made on the life of his step-daughter, Emma. Although he denied it later, Lawson had made it clear that he did not care for the child that was not of his own blood, and this perhaps drove the wedge of suspicion and distrust even further between him and the child’s mother, his wife, Mary Christina. Maybe he thought the child stood in the way of his relationship with Mary, or maybe he took his frustration with his marriage out on the child, but in any case, the Lawson household was a powder keg.

On that bright, moonlit night in late summer of 1894, the family powder keg exploded. Little six-year-old Emma had for some reason arisen from her bed at night. It may be that the family was sleeping under the stars, the better to protect their valuable vegetable garden from animal intruders, so the child was outdoors. Lawson also awoke, and in an instant, shot and killed the girl.

His excuse was that he mistook her for a skunk raiding the garden, and despite the bright moonlight, had made a horrible mistake. Suspicion of his motives immediately arose among the neighboring inhabitants of the foothills. Someone made a test with a

house cat under the moon, and declared that it was plain to see that it was not a child. The county newspaper soon chimed in with an editorial demanding an investigation, and suggesting that the only correct punishment was to hang Lawson as a threat to the community, should he not be lynched first.

The public outcry moved the county authorities to act. In late September of 1894 he was brought to account in Madera, held to answer to the superior court on a charge of murder. The evidence consisted mainly of Lawson's statements to others, where witnesses told of his threats to kill the child and the differing accounts he offered of the incident, claiming he shot at a skunk, or an Indian dog, or other stories. Those accounts, combined with the housecat test, persuaded the court to hold Lawson with \$3000.00 bond.

After this act, it would seem that his tenuous marriage was irretrievably doomed. During the court proceedings, a Madera County constable was giving Lawson a ride home to his ranch when they happened to meet Mrs. Lawson and Sam Dalton in a wagon headed to the city of Madera. Lawson demanded that his wife return home with him, and when she refused, he pulled her off the wagon, and as described in the newspaper, "proceeded to give her a good drubbing". Dalton and the constable intervened. When she arrived in Madera, Mrs. Lawson attempted to get a warrant for her husband's arrest for battery, but was not successful. She would wait many months for justice of any sort.

On November 14, 1894, Lawson was brought to trial for murder of his step-daughter. Although testimony brought out that Lawson disliked and had often threatened to kill the child, his defense was that he mistook her for a wild animal in the garden, and it was all a mistake. Despite statements of threats, beatings and abuse by her husband, Mary Lawson's testimony was subject to some prejudice because of her reported affair, and she was even described in the newspaper as a "poor, ignorant, half-witted wife who was not a 'Virgin Mary'". Two days later, the coroner's jury, which included Madera County Sheriff Sam Westfall, in the case of the People against James Lawson, found him not guilty. He was a free man, but a tortured soul.

## **More Gunshots in the Night**

Just weeks later, on Christmas Eve in 1894, a dance was held at a home in the small foothill community of Bellview Station (also known as Sesame). James and Mary Lawson were in attendance. Perhaps they had reconciled sufficiently to celebrate the holiday season, but it was short-lived. Sam Dalton was also at the dance, and Lawson saw enough to become enraged with jealousy at the attention Dalton paid to Mary, and called Mary out of the room. At about 2:00 a.m., shots were heard outside of the dance hall.

According to a man named O. H. Cole, he heard the shots and ran outside, coming upon the scene of Lawson emptying his gun into the prostrate form of his wife. Lawson threatened Cole for intervening, so Cole ran back inside, procured a pistol and, accompanied by another man, returned to the scene. Lawson ran off, followed by gunshots from Cole, none of which were thought to have taken effect.

Initial reports had it that Mary was dead, shot three times. She did survive the encounter, although gravely wounded. In an interview, Mrs. Lawson said she was accosted by her husband, who demanded to know if she was going to leave him or not. She replied that it was her intention to leave him, so he struck her, and shot her in the breast while she was down, then shot her twice more in the neck and face. He tried to shoot her again, but the gun failed, and he began to kick her, stopping only when he heard others coming and ran off.

Lawson himself deflected the blame for the shooting. He later claimed that Mary had called him outside of the dancehall into the darkness, and Dalton had shot at him first in an attempt to kill him. Then as he ran to escape, Mary had shot at him, hitting him in the head (where a large scar was later visible), so he overpowered her, took the gun, and shot her. Lawson claimed that his own pistol was faulty and “wouldn’t kill anybody...it was no good”.

Mary was gravely wounded, and Lawson was on the run for attempted murder, also wounded in the head – either by Mary or in a suicide attempt. The shock waves reverberated through the foothill community. The news also began to echo around the state, and newspapers in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Mariposa took up the story.

## Revenge

On Christmas night, the wounded Mrs. Lawson was moved to the home of Mr. Kennedy in Bellview Station. Sam Dalton was in attendance on her as she lay injured. And James Lawson was angry and bent on revenge against Dalton. After robbing a man of a rifle, he returned armed to Bellview Station and to the house in which Mary lay. Upon finding Dalton there, Lawson broke the window of Mary’s room and fired a shot at Dalton, missing him. Dalton grabbed a gun and returned fire, hitting Lawson in his side, a non-fatal wound. Dalton then left the house and ran to a neighbor, Mr. Crarey, who had hunted for Lawson the previous day at his homestead (and had taken possession of Lawson’s shotgun). Crarey ran to Kennedy’s house and found Lawson in the room with Mary, and overpowered him after a brief tussle. Lawson had been lying on the floor next to Mary’s bed talking with her, his pistol and rifle at hand.

James Lawson was captured. He pleaded with his captor to release him that he might go kill Dalton, but instead was transported to Madera, where he was described as presenting a “wild and disordered appearance. His shirt and coat bore bullet marks,

blood stains were on his clothing, and to add to his naturally forbidding appearance, blood and powder marks were on his face and hands. Altogether he was a miserable object.”

Lawson claimed that he was remorseful for shooting his wife, and wanted to see her and let her know that he had no wish to harm her further. He said he had knocked on the window of her room, and told her he would pass her his guns to show he meant no harm, but that he was shot by Dalton through the door.

James Lawson was again in custody in Madera Jail, awaiting prosecution for attempted murder of his wife.

## **An Unexpected Opportunity for Vengeance**

Lawson would be in the Madera Jail for about six weeks anticipating his fate at the hands of the justice system. The Madera County Jail was relatively new, small but substantial, built of brick, with iron-barred windows. On the night of February 11, 1895, the notoriety of James Lawson grew some more as he was one of three prisoners to break jail and escape.

Lawson, George Feran, jailed for larceny, and John Love, jailed for robbery, cut the bars off of their cell window with tools provided by an outside friend of Love. Another inmate, an Indian named James Haslett, tried to raise the alarm, but was beaten and choked into submission by the escapees. There was no immediate chase by the law due to the inclement winter weather.

On the run, the escapees apparently went their separate ways. Authorities expected Lawson to go to the hospital where his wife still lay, and they set up a guard there, but too late, as Lawson, unable to find his wife, saw them first. Then, Lawson headed for familiar ground, the foothills of Madera County, with a single purpose in mind – revenge against Sam Dalton. A week later Lawson met two hunters in the hills, and he told them that he had only departed the jail after the other two inmates had left, seizing an unexpected opportunity to pursue his revenge on the man he accused of intimacy with his wife. He planned to kill Dalton, although he was still unarmed, but he reportedly had some money that his wife had sent him from the hospital before the jailbreak, with which he bought provisions. Sheriff Westfall heard of this report, and went looking for Lawson on his home territory.

News of Lawson’s taste for vengeance and his general whereabouts made the rounds among the residents of Madera and Fresno County. Vigilance was increased among the inhabitants of the far-flung foothill homesteads and ranches for the home-bred desperate outlaw.

## A Bloody Encounter?

One of those ranchers was Joseph Goode, who had property in Madera County a few miles west of Lawson. Goode had earned Lawson's enmity for actively seeking his conviction for the murder of the child, and Lawson swore to kill Goode. A week after his escape from jail, Lawson was spotted skulking around Goode's ranch, armed with a shotgun. A ranch employee, Patrick 'Patsy' Bollivar, spotted Lawson and was threatened with death should he inform Goode, but Goode was not at home that day. Bollivar made an excuse to return to the house, where he also armed himself, and then opened fire on Lawson, who fled after being wounded, as fresh blood was seen.

It was not long before the story of this incident was skeptically received, and Sheriff Westfall soon cast doubt on its veracity. Lawson's reputation was now well-known in Madera County and across the state, but this incident had only one witness, young Bollivar. A year and a half later, in August 1897, Bollivar, now known as Patsy Reardon, was on trial charged with murder himself. In trial, his mental state came under question, and his exploit with Lawson was later accredited "to the workings of a fevered imagination", as reported in the local newspaper.

Through the month of March of 1895, little else was heard of Lawson. The Sheriff believed that Lawson had gone to ground in Fresno County, and was letting things cool down a little before he returned for his revenge. The Sheriff also had little doubt that with a good witness report, he would be able to track Lawson down with bloodhounds.

The public was getting impatient with the Sheriff's patience. A Fresno newspaper published an editorial asking why the Sheriff was allowing Lawson to roam free and terrorize the public. Other outlaws were also on the loose, and Lawson was connected to one named Cliff Regan by witness reports. Both were said to be armed and roaming the hills of Madera County. Public interest in the story remained high.

In late March, a posse was formed, perhaps from the persistent public pressure. Hi Rapelje, a lawman who'd made a name for himself tracking other California outlaws, Sheriff Westfall, and others, outfitted themselves for a long chase, and optimism ran high that the capture was likely at any time. Despite having information on the outlaw's whereabouts, no trace of them could be found. The weather turned foul, snowing and raining and making the streams unfordable, and after two days the posse turned back for home, unsuccessful. Lawson remained a free man.

## Desperate, Soaked and Shoeless

Sheriff Westfall was not very wrong about Lawson's hideout being in Fresno County. On March 23, 1895, the law – almost – caught up with him again.

Lawson had gone to the Fresno County ranch of a man named Strelow, looking for work. The ranch was on the Kings River, just outside of the town of Reedley. Lawson gave a false name and was hired as a laborer. No one suspected his identity and he gave no indication that he was the infamous murderer and jail-breaker. But his attachment to his home was strong, and soon he indiscreetly talked about his gold mine, and attempted to get someone to go attend to some matters for him.

Word reached the law in Reedley, and Constable Street telegraphed to Sheriff Westfall for a physical description, which matched the suspect. Street also telegraphed to learn of the \$25.00 reward for Lawson's capture. A posse was formed, and Constable Street led them to Strelow's farm in horse-drawn buggies.

Street found Strelow at the barn, unloading a wagon of hay. Unbeknownst to the Constable, Lawson was also on the wagon helping unload. Realizing his predicament, Lawson slid off the wagon and bolted through an orchard for the nearby Kings River. Street gave chase, firing his revolver as he ran, with the rest of the posse trailing behind. Lawson, either already being shoeless or having taken off his shoes, reached the riverbank and dived into the stream.

Under a barrage of bullets, Lawson safely made it to the opposite bank. With the river between them, a conversation ensued. Lawson questioned why he was hunted by Fresno County officers, when he was wanted from Madera. He also followed it with some jeers and jokes, defiantly telling them that Madera officers could find him if they wanted him.

Expecting Lawson to be at a disadvantage with bare feet, the posse returned to the nearest bridge to cross the river, and took up the pursuit. Lawson was on flat ground, and he dodged among the trees as he made his way upriver toward the foothills. The posse tracked him until the sun went down, and then returned with lanterns, optimism reigning high that a capture was imminent.

For several days, the chase wore on. The editor of the Madera Tribune newspaper offered a reward of \$50.00 for Lawson's capture, but once again the outlaw, although on foot, eluded his pursuers.

## The Danger of a Square Meal

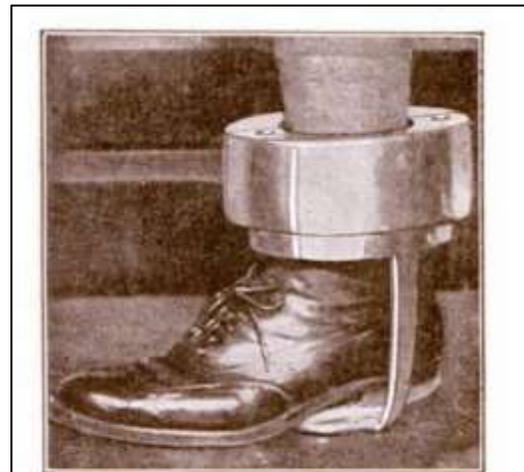
If the law couldn't catch Lawson, perhaps the public could. The Tribune editor sent word to E. B. Hamilton, whom he had employed to watch for Lawson, that Lawson was suspected to be back in the Madera foothills, and a week after his swim for freedom, word came from an Indian camp that Lawson had been there for food.

Then, the evening of March 30, a boy came running to the Hamilton's house, saying that Lawson was at the home of Mrs. Noddin, in North Fork. E. B. Hamilton, his brother Jim, and a friend E. F. Tulley, quickly armed themselves and rode the mile and a half to the Noddin's. When they arrived, Mrs. Noddin opened a window, and whispered that Lawson was inside eating supper, so the men surrounded the house. Lawson heard the arrival and bolted out the front door.

Jim Hamilton ordered him to stop at gunpoint, but Lawson ran for the brush. He was stopped by Ernest Hamilton at the point of a rifle. Outnumbered and without a weapon, the outlaw gave up and offered no further resistance.

The party returned to the Hamilton home with Lawson tied up, and they stayed up late talking. Lawson made a brief rush for an unattended shotgun, but the captors were too quick for him. The next morning he was bound up, and placed in the front seat of a wagon, with a shotgun-toting guard in the back, and they started for Madera. Who should they meet en route but Sam Dalton, who was described by Hamilton as "about the worst scared man I ever saw when we met him...his eyes looked as though they would start out of his head and his knees fairly knocked together." Dalton must have been relieved to see his enemy handcuffed and without a gun.

The Hamiltons and Lawson arrived in Madera that afternoon, where a discouraged Lawson was immediately jailed again in the Madera County Jail. He may have tried to commit suicide by hanging himself with towels, but was saved. This time in jail his leg was outfitted with an 'Oregon boot', a 50-pound device to hobble the prisoner, in order that there would be no further escapes.



**Prisoner Wearing Metal  
Boot Can't Escape**

**D**ANGEROUS criminals, shackled with a metal "Oregon" boot, have little chance to escape during long railway journeys. The boot, a modern adaptation of the old-fashioned ball and chain, consists of a steel framework fitting over the shoe, with a 50-pound collar above the ankle.

The prisoner who wears it can walk slowly with a fair degree of comfort, but should he attempt to run, or move quickly, the heavy weight will break his leg.

## Oh, Forgive Me!

When captured, Lawson had a letter to his wife that he intended to mail from North Fork to the Madera hospital. He gave it to E. B. Hamilton, and a copy was obtained by the newspapers. The language of the letter seems to have been the work of a man educated in the finer language of the period, so perhaps Lawson, a man more used to manual labor than poetry, had his letter polished with some assistance from a headline-seeking newspaper editor:

"Mountain Dell, March the last, 1895--My Dear Wife Stina: I came back once more to our old home with a glimmer of hope that I might find you here, that we might be reunited, but no, all is still as death save for the birds that sing. Oh, darling, I gaze on our home with a broken heart, through fast-falling tears. Oh, cruel fate, who are you so unmerciful? Once more I ransack the house in every nook and corner, every board on the place, with the hope of finding some sign that you have been here and left a penciled scratch or a little note to cheer my aching heart. I went to little Emma's grave and wept half the night, and prayed that God would show mine enemies or those that thought I murdered our darling the right and light, for they have done me a great wrong.

"I could no more help it than fly to the sun. How could I when I did not know it was her before the fatal shot? I knew afterward, but what was the good? I could not recall the shot. Oh, Stina! My grief was so intense I could not shed a tear. A wail wrung from my heart, 'Oh, I am undone,' on that dreadful night, and those words have been true, I am undone sure enough. No wonder I went crazy, to lose all that was nearest and dearest, and all that life was worth living at one fell swoop, and then be shut up in a living tomb with nothing but the thought that another, the slickest villain the sun ever shone upon, was stealing my love and turning you against me.

"Lynch me, tear me to pieces, limb from limb, torture me at the stake, but do not steal my love. Oh, Stina, I cannot live without you, and I cannot die without you. But I will not harm you. I pray God may keep your virtues and you from all serpents that will try to lead you farther astray. I do not think you would have left me if I had been careful with you and kind, instead of abusing you. If I had not loved you so much it would have been better.

"Come back, oh, come back, and I will cherish you, and never speak a cross word with you; I will be kind and good to you and the children.

"The trees are all going to bloom, and everything is just like you left it. Nothing is gone, except a few little things we can easily replace. The mine is rich; I was digging some in it. I can get a partner with a team and soon make some money if the officers will leave me alone.

"I did not break jail. I was asleep in my cell, and I dreamed I got away. Just as I awoke the Indian said: 'Jim, George gone.' I looked and saw the hole, and I went. I was so weak from confinement that I staggered. I fenced up Emma's grave with flowers. Dig at the headboard; there I left a letter for you in a yeast can. Oh, the fairest flower is ahead, but love will live. Stina, let us meet again. Forgive me; oh, forgive me! Let us be happy once more. Your, Jim Lawson."

The local news called it the ramblings of a lunatic but perhaps it was the work of a defense attorney laying the groundwork for a legal defense.

On April 15, Lawson was arraigned in Superior Court, and his trial set for May 14, 1895. The Oregon boot was removed for the hearing. During the arraignment, the District Attorney facetiously remarked to the court that Mr. Lawson had returned from a temporary absence and he hoped he'd be present for his trial. At which, Lawson is said to have given a sarcastic grin.

## **Loose Bricks**

In an ironic move, Lawson was jailed in the same cell as James Haslett, the Indian convicted of murder, who was beaten into submission by the escapees several months previous for trying to raise the alarm as Lawson and the others had slipped out of the window. This time, however, they worked together.

During the night of April 15, Lawson and Haslett burned out the bolt in a band of sheet-iron which ran around the base of their cell. Once that could be removed, and using the wire bail of a bucket, they created a chisel, and dug out the mortar between the bricks of the wall. In an hour, they had created a hole large enough to get out.

Three other men described as hobos, and jailed for vagrancy, also made their escape that night by prying off the iron bars of their cell window. The jailer did not discover the escapes until the following morning. The Sheriff was notified, but he had few clues to follow to track the five men. Judge Conley made an order discharging the jailer from further service, and to send all county prisoners hereafter to the Fresno County jail for safe keeping until a suitable, and escape-proof, jail could be built in Madera.

It was a certain black eye for the county authorities, and James Lawson was again on the loose.

## **News Is Not All Good**

The local newspaper soon speculated that Lawson was enjoying quiet recreation at his homestead. The Sheriff was furious at the county for the conditions of the jail, and reports had it that he was not eager to track the fugitives, particularly as the winter weather was still stormy. During the last half of April, 1895, Lawson was reported by neighbors and mountain residents as seen visiting a local mine and living at his home. One neighbor spoke with Lawson, who said he was still looking for the opportunity to kill Sam Dalton before he left the country. Lawson had plenty of provisions and had leased his pasture to sheepmen, staying at his old home unmolested without fear of capture.

By early May, 1895, however, sightings of Lawson had ceased. A posse searching for him found evidence that he had been at his ranch, and had left another letter to his wife beseeching her return to him, but the place had been empty for weeks. He had left the county, his mission to kill Dalton unfulfilled.

In late June, however, Lawson could once again not keep himself from causing his own predicament. When jailed, he had befriended a jailer named Saxe. Lawson told Saxe that should he ever be freed, he'd write the jailer for news of his ranch and wife and children. Curiosity got the better of Lawson, and Saxe got a letter from the fugitive under the pseudonym 'Gorge A. Upton'. This time, the published letter did not have the benefit of a more educated editor, as it read:

Plymouth, June 22, 1895. Mr. Bud Socks. Kind Friend as your are aware that I got away and fooled that thing of myne what did she do after I left what did the people say how is the sentiment where is my wife is she in the hospitle yet or has she goan to Utah or is she with Daulton the black S B or is she at the ranch please let me know for God sake let me know all you can. You know you promised me you would my health is all shattered I am so nervous I can hardly write do you think thay would shinch me if I came back I would like to save my home stid please write soon. Address Gorge A. Upton Plymouth, Your Efectionate friend, Cal. J. L.

The jailer immediately notified Sheriff Westfall, who soon boarded a train for Plymouth in Amador County. Saxe wrote back to Lawson, and Westfall was waiting at the post office when Lawson called for the letter.

This time Lawson was jailed in the Fresno County jail, in a cell in the upper corridor, one of the most secure.

## **Trial and Tribulation**

After his capture, Lawson consented to interviews with the local and regional press. Given the ill effects of his weeks on the run, Lawson was described as 'haggard', with a neglected beard and a wildness of appearance. Informed that the newspapers had published an announcement of his wife's elopement with Sam Dalton, Lawson sadly observed that Dalton had been the cause of all his trouble. "He [Dalton] is up there in my home with her now...they have been together all along", said Lawson. He went on to say,

"He sought my wife's company on every possible occasion. After I shot my child by accident Dalton was with her more than ever. He was with her at the ball in Bellview when I shot at her. He lived about four miles from my place. I am perfectly sure that Dalton was unduly intimate with my wife a year and a half ago. She is with him now."

Lawson claimed Dalton had fired at him first at the dance in Bellview, and that he did not shoot until Dalton tried to interfere by shooting at him.

Lawson's claims in the newspaper may have served to influence the future jury pool. On July 13, his trial on the attempted murder of his wife began. It took some time to find the requisite unbiased jurors owing to Lawson's notoriety. The defense questions to the jurors indicated that Lawson would plead not guilty by emotional insanity, a claim certainly buttressed by his public comments of his marital distress.

Mary Lawson was the first to testify. The trial lasted three days. After several votes and thirteen hours of deliberation, the jury remained hung, with the majority for conviction. The court discharged the jury, set a new trial date for September 1895, and remitted Lawson back to the Fresno County jail. His attorney indicated he would seek a change of venue in view of the fact that Lawson had had two trials already in Madera, and public sentiment was against him.

### **But the Law Won**

On September 19, 1895, James Lawson again went to trial in Madera. Again, Mary Lawson was the first to testify, relating to the jury how she was shot by her husband at the dance in Bellview on Christmas Eve when she told him she was leaving him.

The defense called James Lawson, and his story was that he was induced outside of the dance that night by his wife so he could be assassinated by Sam Dalton. He said he only shot his wife after she shot him in the head, and he wrestled the pistol from her.

One defense witness testified that he had seen a letter from Mary to Sam Dalton telling him she was going to Lawson's trial with a gun, to shoot him if he were to be acquitted. The testimony was stricken, but Mary Lawson still apparently feared her husband.

By the end of the third day, this jury had rendered a verdict of guilty of attempted murder. On October 14, Lawson was sentenced to twelve years in the state penitentiary.

On October 15, 1895, Sheriff Westfall delivered James "Mormon Jimmy" Lawson to the state prison at Folsom. His outlaw saga ended at the hands of the law.



James "Mormon Jimmy" Lawson. He has a short white beard and wears a slouch hat. He is digging dirt into a sluice box. The San Joaquin River or a tributary is in the background. There is a shovel laying on a pile of dirt in the middle of the picture, and three bags of gold or gold-bearing sand are sitting near the shovel. This photograph was taken after James Lawson was released from Folsom Prison. A copy of the photo was donated to the Sierra National Forest by Glenn A. Green in 1999.

**Postscript:** The Lawson family and Sam Dalton can be followed through US Census records, voter registration, marriage, and other state and county records.

In the letters and quotes attributed to James Lawson in the newspaper stories, he refers to his children, besides the step-daughter that he killed. Mary Lawson was born in 1891, and was a young child during her parent's troubles. Ruth Lawson was born March 19, 1895, according to Madera County birth records and the 1900 US Census, which means that her mother was pregnant when she was beaten and shot in the fall of 1894, a detail ignored in newspaper stories. When Lawson was captured on March 30, 1895, he had a letter for his wife to be mailed to the Madera hospital; she may have been there giving birth.

Samuel Lewis Dalton was originally from Tennessee. In 1894, when the trouble started, he was 54 years old. Mary Christina Lawson and Sam Dalton were living together by 1896, and eventually got married in 1896 or 1903, living out the rest of their lives in Fresno County. They first moved to the city of Fresno, and then to the town of Laton, where Sam worked for the railroad. They had two children together, a son Berry, born in 1898, and a daughter Linda, born in 1905. Sam Dalton died in 1924. Mary Dalton lived a long life. She died in Fresno in 1961 at the age of 92.

James Lawson finished his prison sentence and returned to Madera County. He partnered with an ex-convict named Emile Modeste in some mining ventures. A 1967 Fresno Bee article about Lawson described how he and Modeste ended up destitute and wards of the County. Lawson died in 1938, and was buried in Madera County.

**Author's Note:** I read an account of Mormon Jimmy written by Frank Eugene "Gene" Tully, one of the original rangers of the Sierra National Forest in 1903, and possibly the same (E. F.) Tully that helped capture Lawson the second time. I found Tully's account a bit fantastical, but my interest was piqued, so I decided to check contemporary newspaper accounts. The newspaper articles told a story even more fantastical about a man whose life quickly descended into chaos, and how it became of interest to a wide readership across the state. Both Tully's version, written much later than the actual events of the story, and a 1967 news article about Lawson, tell that he escaped briefly once more, from the train ride to prison with Sheriff Westfall. This is apparently apocryphal and owes itself to his legend, as no news accounts could be found. Although the contemporary newspaper stories surely contain a certain amount of hyperbole inserted by editors and reporters, this is the story of Mormon Jimmy.

### **Attachments:**

Newspaper Articles

Story of Jimmie the Mormon, by Gene Tully

April 1967 Fresno Bee Article: Mormon Jimmy –Gold, Beans, Tragedy

# Newspaper Articles about James Lawson 1894-1896.

---

**September 19, 1894, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Investigation Demanded. Suspicion That a Madera County Man Murdered His Child** (From the Madera Tribune). The people in the vicinity of North Fork are still very indignant over the shooting of the innocent little girl who was shot by Jim Lawson several weeks since on a bright moonlight night under the flimsy excuse that he mistook her for a polecat. Many of them think that he is guilty of willful murder and ought to suffer for the heinous crime. A party from that part of the country was in this place recently and reported that unless the officers of the law took some action in the matter that there was liable to be a necktie party unless a certain party absented himself from those parts. It is said that the mother of the child, Mrs. Lawson (supposed to be her name) awoke at the flash of the gun and heard the little child say "Oh, papa!" as the contents of the gun entered her little head. Lawson may be an innocent man so far as the intent to commit murder is concerned but if the officers of the law of the county do their sworn duty he will be given an opportunity to vindicate himself. While the Tribune is not at all in favor of lynch law, whether a person is known to be guilty or not, it is of the opinion that when a man does such an act of which Lawson is thought to be guilty his existence ought to be ended at the end of a three-quarter rope, as he is an unsafe man to let run at large. It is said that a test was made with a house cat, and that at the distance from where Lawson stood when he shot the child, the cat could not be plainly seen, but that the long hairs surrounding its mouth were plainly discernable. Let this matter be investigated. It may put the county to some expense without a conviction, but the civilized people of the county do not intend to let a matter of such importance pass by without a passing notice at least, let it cost what it may, and if the county cannot withstand the expense it had better disorganize as a county and go back to its mother, as a bad state of affairs exist when innocent children can be shot down like dogs and the affair passed by almost unnoticed on the plea of expense to the county.

---

**September 21, 1894, Fresno Republican Weekly**

**Charged with Murder.** James Larson the man who claimed to have accidentally shot his 6-year-old girl at North Fork, Madera county, some time ago, has been arrested for murder. The statement made by Larson was that in the evening he mistook his child for a 'coon and shot and killed her. The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of accidental death. Larson and his wife were the only witnesses before the jury. The people living in the vicinity of the shooting did not believe his story and say it was a cruel murder. Larson and his wife are reported as not getting along very well together. He has often threatened her life and has maltreated the girl, who was his step-daughter.

---

**September 28, 1894, Fresno Republican Weekly**

**Struck His Wife.** The Madera Mercury says that Jimmie Lawson, the miner who was brought to Madera a few days ago on a charge of murder, for having shot his child at North Fork some time ago, was taken to his home Tuesday last by Deputy Constable Askew. A little way beyond Bates they met Lawson's wife coming to town. She was riding with a teamster named Sam Dalton. Lawson asked the woman to return home with him but she declined to do so. The refusal seemed to anger the man, for he jumped out of the buggy and pulled the woman off the wagon. He proceeded to give her a good drubbing, but was prevented from doing so by the deputy constable and the teamster. When Mrs. Lawson reached Madera she sought to get a warrant out for the arrest of her husband on the charge of battery, but was not successful. She then left for home, as is supposed.

---

**October 3, 1894, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Lawson Held to Answer. The Man Who Shot His Child in Madera County.** James Lawson, who shot and killed his child in the mountains of Madera County some time ago, claiming that he mistook the girl for a skunk, has had his preliminary examination in Madera, and has been held to answer to the superior court on a charge of murder. The evidence, so far as brought out, consisted principally of what Lawson himself said of the occurrence. He said to one person that when he shot the child he mistook her for a skunk. To another person he said he thought she was an Indian dog. To others he told still different stories, and it is claimed that on one occasion he almost admitted he shot the child to get her out of the way. Persons who visited the premises and made experiments on a night with the same moonlight said that it was impossible for Lawson to have mistaken the child for any wild animal at the distance he was from her. It was deemed by the Justice court that there was enough evidence to justify further investigation, and the defendant was accordingly held with bonds in the sum of \$3000.

---

**November 14, 1894, Riverside Daily Press**

**A Madera Murderer on Trial.** Madera, Nov. 14.--The case of Jas. Lawson, accused of killing his five-year-old daughter, is on in Judge Conley's court today. Lawson shot and instantly killed the child in August, claiming he mistook it for a skunk. The child was a step-daughter and he disliked it and often threatened to kill it.

---

**November 17, 1894, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Lawson Not Guilty.** In Madera yesterday the jury in the case of the People against James Lawson found him not guilty. He was charged with the murder of his child by shooting it, claiming that he mistook the little girl for some wild animal.

---

**December 24, 1894, Sacramento Record-Union**

**Shot and Killed His Wife.** Madera, Dec. 23.--James Lawson shot and killed his wife last night at a dance in Belleview, a mountain town. Jealousy over the attentions of other men was the cause of the crime.

---

**December 25, 1894, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Murdered His Wife. Desperate Deed In Madera County. Jim Lawson is the Murderer -- He Escapes in the Darkness -- Talk of Lynching.** A dispatch in yesterday's Chronicle from Madera has the following: The news of a shocking murder at Bellview station, twenty-six miles from here was brought to this city early this morning by J. M. Dyer. Jim Lawson, known as "Mormon" Jimmy, and who, it will be remembered, was on trial in the Superior County of this county about six weeks ago for shooting and killing his six-year-old stepdaughter, shot and killed his wife at a dance this morning. The dance was in progress at Bellview station and Lawson and his wife were in attendance. Ever since his acquittal on the charge of murdering the little girl Lawson, who has always borne the reputation of being a brutal and unnatural husband and father, had, according to the statements of his wife, beaten and abused her unmercifully, making frequent threatens against her life, and the woman lived in daily fear of him. Last night saw the culmination of this abuse in the cold-blooded murder of Mrs. Lawson. About 2 o'clock this morning shots were heard in the vicinity of the dance hall, and O. H. Cole left the room, and going in the direction of the shots, was horrified to come upon Lawson emptying his revolver into the prostate form of his wife. Upon attempting to interfere Lawson turned his weapon toward Cole, threatening to shoot the latter if he interfered. Rushing back into the hall, Cole procured a pistol and, accompanied by another man, hastened to where he had left Lawson and the murdered woman. Lawson started to run, pursued by the two men, who fired at the fleeing murderer as they ran. None of the shots, however, are thought to have taken effect. J. M. Dyer was immediately dispatched to Madera to notify the officers and to procure the services of a physician. Constables McCluskey and Wells started immediately upon receipt of the news of the murder. A posse was formed soon after the killing, but owing to the darkness Lawson escaped. He will probably be able to elude capture until he can reach the hills, when he will have an undoubted advantage in dodging the officers. Should he be captured by the citizens of his neighborhood it will be very hard to avert a lynching. It is thought that Lawson will never be taken alive. The death of the woman must have been instantaneous. Three of the shots took effect, and any one of them would have been fatal. One ball entered the head just below the right eye, piercing the brain. Another passed through the neck, and the third took effect in the breast. The cause of the killing is supposed to have been jealousy. It is claimed that Lawson was enraged because of the attention of another man to his wife during the evening. He called the woman from the room, and they had been gone but a few moments when the shots were heard. The killing by Lawson of his stepdaughter a few weeks ago is still fresh in the minds of the people, for his trial ended but recently. The feeling against him is exceedingly bitter, and now there are many who believe that he deliberately killed the child. He was acquitted of the crime, his defense being that he shot the girl, mistaking her in the dark for a wild animal. The shooting occurred while the child was outside the house one night.

---

**December 26, 1894, San Francisco Call**

**Bent on Revenge. But Instead He Got a Bullet in the Side.** Madera, Dec. 25.--James Lawson, who shot his wife at Belleview last Sunday morning, was captured early this morning. Lawson seemed determined to be revenged on a man named Daulton, who he claimed was too intimate with his wife, and last night returned to the house at Belleview, where his wife was lying wounded--not killed, as first reported--and breaking the window shot at Daulton, who returned the fire, wounding Lawson in the right side. Daulton then fled and wakened James Crarey, who was in a neighboring house. Crarey went to the house where the shooting occurred and finding Lawson inside sprang in and overpowered him. Lawson begged to be released, that he might kill Daulton, who he said was responsible for all his trouble.

---

**December 26, 1894, Los Angeles Herald**

James Lawson, who shot his wife at Madera, has been captured.

---

**December 27, 1894, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson Captured. He Ventured Back to See His Wounded Wife.** The San Francisco Chronicle of yesterday has the following dispatch from Madera: Jim Lawson, the man who a few weeks ago killed his six-year-old child and last Saturday emptied a revolver into his wife at Belleview station, was captured early this morning at the house where his wife is lying badly wounded. Lawson went to the house last night for the purpose of shooting a man named Daulton, whom he accused of being too intimate with his wife. Lawson appeared at the house last night and found Daulton there. He broke the window of the room in which the latter was and fired a shot at him with his rifle, but missed the mark. Daulton procured a weapon and returned fire, wounding Lawson in the side. After firing the shot which struck Lawson Daulton ran from the house and hastened to the residence of James Crorery, a neighbor. Crorery was awakened and went at once to the place where the shooting had occurred. He found Lawson in the house and overpowered him. After his capture Lawson pleaded for his release that he might kill Daulton. Lawson was brought here and imprisoned this afternoon. Lawson presented a wild and disordered appearance. His shirt and coat bore bullet marks, blood stains were on his clothing, and to add to his naturally forbidding appearance, blood and powder marks were upon his face and hands. Altogether he was a miserable object. His wound is not dangerous, according to the statement of County Physician Brown and Dr. W. C. Reid. The bullet entered the fleshy portion of the side, ranged backward, and emerged about three and a half inches from where it entered. Lawson also carries a bullet in his head, the result of an attempt to take his life immediately after the attempt to kill his wife last Saturday night. The man who made the capture, Crorery, tells it as follows: "I started out to hunt for Lawson the night after the shooting. I went to his ranch expecting to find him there, but was disappointed. I took his shotgun which I found at his cabin. I then came back to Belleview. "In the night Daulton came into the room, claiming that he had just been shot at by Lawson. I got up and went toward Kennedy's house, where Mrs. Lawson has been ever since she was shot last Saturday. "On reaching the house and peering through a hole in the panels I saw Lawson lying on a mattress on the floor. He was talking to his wife, who was lying on the bed. His pistol was lying beside him on the floor, and his rifle was leaning against the bed. I pushed the door open, and before Lawson could do anything had him overpowered. "He acted like a wild animal when he found I had the best of him, and gritted his teeth and snarled like a demon." Lawson says that he felt remorseful for what he had done, and wanted to see his wife, and that he had no wish to harm her further. He says that he went to the house where his wife was and going around to her window knocked upon it, telling her that he wanted to see her, and that he would not hurt her. "I told her that I would pass my gun and revolver through the window," said Lawson today, "to prove to her that I meant no harm." He says that he was shot by Daulton through the door. This is borne out by a hole in the door. Lawson was seen later, but refused to give any further particulars of the affair. Attorney R. E. Rhodes was with him today. The Madera Mercury publishes an interview with Mrs. Lawson with regard to the wounds she received from her husband last Saturday. Is in substance as follows: When she went outside Lawson followed her and asked her if she was going to her home in Utah. He told her that she should not leave him, and he became exceedingly angry when she persisted in saying she fully intended to leave him. He struck her, knocking her down, and while she was prostrate shot her in the breast. He then grabbed her by the head and placing the pistol to her face pulled the trigger. He fired another shot, still holding the weapon in proximity to her face. The ball went through her neck. He pulled the trigger several times but the cartridges failed to explode. This seemed to enrage the man for he made several vigorous kicks at his wife's abdomen. She was in a delicate condition, and when he kicked at her she avoided the kicks by catching his pantaloons leg. It was then that Lawson ran off as he heard people coming out of the house.

---

**December 29, 1894, Mariposa Gazette**

**A Madera County Murder.** Last Saturday night at a dance at Bellview Station, Madera County, James Lawson shot and killed his wife. Lawson is the man who was tried about six weeks ago on the charge of shooting his six-year-old stepdaughter. The girl was outside the house and he claimed he thought he was shooting at a wild animal. He was acquitted. At the dance he became mad because another man paid some attention to his wife and calling her outside shot her three times. He escaped into the mountains. Later news states that Mrs. Lawson is still alive, although shot three times. After the shooting, Lawson robbed a man of a rifle, and on Monday night he went to the house of Mr. Kennedy, where his wife was, for the purpose of seeing her and killing a man named Daulton. He fired through the window without effect, and Daulton returned fire, wounding Lawson in the side. Daulton called a neighbor and Lawson, who had entered the room where his wife was, was surprised and captured. He is wounded in the side and head, but his injuries are not considered dangerous.

---

**February 12, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jail Break at Madera. Prisoners Succeed in Making Their Escape.** Word was received in Fresno last night that the prisoners confined in the Madera jail had broken out. The particulars of the escape are meager, but it was learned that George Herran, charged with larceny, James Larsen, who recently shot his wife at Belleview, and a Mexican, charged with robbery, were among those who escaped. The prison in Madera is built of brick and is several years old, having been erected before the county was divided. It is small but substantial. It is said that another prisoner attempted to give the alarm when he saw that an escape was about to be effected, but was set upon and choked into silence. The sheriff's office here was notified and the city police were put on the lookout for any fugitives who may come this way.

---

**February 12, 1895, San Francisco Chronicle** (Portion of article).

**Through a Window. Three Prisoners Regain Liberty. An Indian Who Tried to Alarm the Jailer Roughly Handled.** Special Dispatch to the Chronicle. Madera, February 11. The Madera jail was broken to-night and three of the prisoners escaped. They were James Lawson, John Love, and George Ferron. The prisoners gained their liberty by sawing the iron bars of one of the windows. The work was accomplished with tools furnished to Love by friends outside the jail. All three of the men are bad characters and all were awaiting their trial on charges of felony. Lawson is charged with an attempt to murder his wife at a dance in the mountains. He also killed his child about two months prior to the assault on his wife, but was acquitted of criminal intent. He had been acting in a strange manner of late, and tonight the hospital where his wife is confined is being closely guarded for fear that he will again attempt to take her life. ... Confined with these three men was Jim Haslitt, the half-breed Indian, who is charged with the murder of Pasquale Milesi near Raymond. On being interviewed he said that he was in his cell, and noticing the efforts of the other three prisoners to escape he shouted for the jailer, but that he was choked into submission by one while the others escaped. He was bleeding at the mouth when the jailer arrived. Every effort is being made to apprehend the escapes, but the officers do not expect to accomplish much tonight on account of the inclement weather.

---

**February 13, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**The Madera Jail Break.** Up to latest accounts the prisoners who escaped the Madera jail Monday evening had not been apprehended. They got out by sawing off the bars of the window. An Indian prisoner who tried to give the alarm was badly beaten by those preparing to escape.

---

**February 21, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson Seen. He Says He Wants to Kill Sam Dalton.** A man down from Belleview, Madera county, reports that James Lawson, also known as "Mormon Jimmy" who escaped from the Madera county jail last week, had been seen in that vicinity recently. Two hunters had accidentally run across him, and to them he told his story. Belleview is Lawson's home, the place where he attempted to kill his wife. Lawson told the hunters that he left the jail in Madera after Feran and Love had already departed; he has consequently seen neither of them since the break for liberty. Lawson was not armed, although he said he was up in that part of the country to kill Sam Dalton, whom it is said he accuses of having been intimate with his wife. Lawson said that he would not leave the country until he had accomplished his purpose. Sheriff Westfall of Madera has heard of Lawson's presence in Belleview, and he is in the country now looking for his man. It is reported that Mrs. Lawson, who is at the hospital at Madera, sent \$12.50 to her husband just before he broke jail. Lawson has had this to buy his food with. Ben Merritt, who was formerly constable in Belleview, says that if Westfall can only find Lawson he will have no trouble arresting him. George Feran and John Love, who escaped from the jail with Lawson, have been heard from in the vicinity of Firebaughs. The speedy capture of all three of the fugitives is regarded as almost certain.

---

**February 28, 1895, Sacramento Daily Union**

**Received A Load Of Lead. James Lawson, an Escape From Jail, Shot Near Madera. Madera, Feb. 27.**--Word was brought from the mountains today that James Lawson, who broke jail a short time since, had been shot and wounded by Patsy Bollivar, and employee of Joe Goode, last Friday. Lawson was discovered skulking about Goode's premises armed with a shotgun, and, when discovered, threatened Bollivar with death should he inform Goode of his whereabouts. Bollivar, upon some pretext, succeeded in getting to the house, where he got a rifle and opened fire on Lawson, who fled after being wounded. Lawson felt bitter about Goode, as the latter had been active in trying to secure Lawson's conviction for child-murder, and had gone there with the avowed intention of killing Goode, who, fortunately, was not at home.

---

**February 28, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Madera Desperado Shot. A Ranchhand Fires On and Wounds a Murderous Criminal. Duel on a Farm in the Mountains of Madera County.** Madera, Feb. 27.--James Lawson, the fugitive desperado, is in hiding in the mountains, with a bullet in his body, having been shot and wounded last Friday by a ranchhand named Patrick Bollivar. How seriously he is wounded is not known. Lawson is a desperate criminal. He came into notoriety in criminal annals last fall, when he shot his little stepdaughter one night. The family were camping in a tent on their ranch. During the night Lawson arose and taking his rifle stepped outside. A moment later he fired, and when his wife ran out she found her little daughter dead. Lawson was arrested and tried. His defense was that he mistook the child, which had left the tent for a moment, for a wild animal. He was acquitted. Shortly afterward he and his wife attended at dance at Belleview, a little hamlet in the mountains near Madera. Lawson was jealous of the attention paid his wife by a young rancher and he called her out. A few minutes later there were heard rounds of firing, and a neighbor came running into the dance hall shouting for a revolver and said that Lawson was killing his wife. A pistol was procured after a short delay and the neighbor ran out. Lawson was bending over the prostrate body of his wife and apparently was going to shoot again when the rescuer opened up on him. A duel followed, but Lawson finally fled into the hills, after having received a slight wound. He had shot his wife twice, once in the breast and once in the throat. A posse pursued him, but he eluded them. A few nights later, Lawson suddenly appeared at the house where his wife was lying, slowly recovering from her painful wounds. He broke into the door and attempted to kill the rancher who was in the room at the time, but who escaped and gave the alarm. Lawson was captured in the room, where he lay on the floor with a rifle beside him. He was taken to jail in Madera. A few weeks later, he, in company with two others, broke jail, and nothing more was seen of him till last Friday. On that day, Bollivar, who is an employee on Joseph Goode's ranch, saw Lawson skulking about the farm armed with a shotgun and when discovered he threatened Bollivar with death should he inform Goode of his whereabouts. Bollivar, on some pretext, succeeded in getting into the house, where he got a rifle and opened fire on Lawson, who fled after being wounded. Lawson felt bitter about Goode as the latter had been active in trying to secure Lawson's conviction for child murder, and he had gone there with the avowed intention of killing Goode, who, fortunately, was not at home. Efforts to capture Lawson will be renewed.

---

**February 28, 1895, Los Angeles Herald**

**Caught by a Bullet. The Madera Wife-Murderer Said to Be in Custody. Madera, Feb. 27.**--Word was brought from the mountains today that James Lawson, who broke jail a short time since, had been shot and wounded by Patsy Bollivar, and employee of Joe Goode, last Friday. Lawson was discovered skulking about Goode's premises armed with a shotgun, and, when discovered, threatened Bollivar with death should he inform Goode of his whereabouts. Bollivar, upon some pretext, succeeded in getting to the house, where he got a rifle and opened fire on Lawson, who fled after being wounded. Lawson felt bitter about Goode, as the latter had been active in trying to secure Lawson's conviction for child-murder, and had gone there with the avowed intention of killing Goode, who, fortunately, was not at home.

---

**February 28, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Lawson Wounded. By Patsy Bolivar at Joe Goode's Place. The Escaped Prisoner Had Gone There With the Intention of Killing Goode.** Madera, February 27. --Word was brought from the mountains today that James Lawson, who broke jail a short time since, had been shot and wounded by Patsy Bollivar, and employee of Joe Goode, last Friday. Lawson was discovered about Goode's premises armed with a shotgun and when discovered threatened Bollivar with death should he inform Goode of his whereabouts. Lawson felt bitter against Goode as the latter had been active in trying to secure Lawson's conviction for child murder, and had gone there with the avowed intention of killing Goode, who fortunately was not at home.

---

**March 8, 1895, Fresno Republican Weekly**

**Sheriff Westfall's Plan for Capturing Jim Lawson.** The story that Jim Lawson was recently wounded in the mountains is not believed by Sheriff Westfall of Madera county. The Mercury says that the Sheriff is of the opinion that Lawson has gone over to the Fresno side and will not show up until he believes that the officers have ceased hunting for him, and that he will then come back and shoot some of the men against whom he has a bitter enmity. The sheriff stated further that he had men on the lookout for Lawson, and as soon as they reported that Lawson was seen he intended to send to Fresno for the trained bloodhounds that are kept there, and take them with him into the mountains and run Lawson down with them. The hounds belong to one of the deputy Sheriffs and will follow a trail a week old. Sheriff Westfall believes that as soon as Lawson can be located he will be able to run him down with the dogs.

---

**March 9, 1895, Sausalito News**

Word comes from Madera that James Lawson, who broke jail there a short time since, has been shot and wounded by Patrick Bollivar, on Joe Goode's ranch.

---

**March 14, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Regan and Lawson.** The report has reached Madera that Cliff Regan and Jim Lawson are roaming the hills together, and that they recently slept in a livery stable at Raymond. Both were armed.

---

**March 15, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Information Wanted. A Correspondent Inquires About the Madera County Officers.** Editor Republican: will you kindly allow me space in your valuable paper to inquire what has become of the Madera county officials, that the people of the mountain regions are allowed to be terrorized by James Lawson, one of the most vicious, uncouth and brutish murderers ever allowed to roam unmolested in a civilized country, where officers are paid to protect life and property? Mr. Westfall, the present sheriff, was one of the Coroner's jury that found him guiltless of the murder of his stepdaughter on a night when a cat's claws were plainly visible at the distance he stood when he fired the shot that sent the child he had often sworn to kill into eternity. Can it be Mr. Westfall still harbors the same prejudice that would not allow him to listen to the testimony, on that occasion, simply because Lawson's poor, ignorant, half-witted wife was not a "Virgin Mary"? In infer the taxpayers would far rather attribute it to the pusillanimous neglect than to think the man paid to protect their homes had so little mental balance as to try the woman's virtue against the man who tried to murder her. In the mountains lives a widow, unprotected from than man Lawson. He has sworn to kill her and her family, as well as others that are able, and do have a guard to protect themselves against him. Are people's lives, living in the Sierras not as precious as those living in Madera? When Lawson escaped officers rushed to the hospital to prevent bloodshed there. Can you tell me why they do not rush to the mountains? It is not probable that the officers expect to capture their escaped prisoner on the streets of Madera. I think if they would go up in the vicinity of North Fork they would have no trouble locating Lawson without the assistance of Deputy Sheriff Timmin's bloodhounds, either. Inquirer.

---

**March 20, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Trailing Two Outlaws. A Well-Known Man-Hunter's Mission in the Madera Mountains.** Fresno, March 19. --Hi Rapelje, the officer who captured John Sontag, the train-robber, has been employed by the Madera County officers to gone on the trail of Clifford Regan and James Lawson, tow outlaws and would-be murderers. Regan is wanted as a witness in a trial for burglary, and at one time he shot and nearly killed an officer who was attempting to subpoena him. Lawson had been held for the attempted murder of his wife, and a short time ago broke jail. The men are thought to be roaming the mountains in Madera County.

---

**March 21, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Joe Goode's Trial. Jim Lawson Said to be After His Scalp.** The trial of Joe Goode for stealing a steer was begun yesterday at Madera. The entire day was spent in securing a jury. Mark Waiser of this city is one of the defendant's attorneys. Goode lives in the Madera county foothills, and had several laborers employed on his ranch. The defense claims the charge is a piece of spite work. It is said that Jim Lawson, who broke jail at Madera, is after Goode's scalp. It is believed that he has for a long time been hovering about Goode's place trying to get an opportunity to shoot him. A short while ago a boy who is working for Goode went to the barn. He was called by Lawson, who was hiding in some bushes nearby. Lawson asked the boy where Goode was and he replied that he was in the house, while in fact Goode was away at the time. Lawson then told the boy to go in and tell Goode to come out to the barn; that he wanted to kill Goode, but the boy was told not to tell Goode upon the pain of death. The boy went to the house and returned with a rifle, taking a shot at Lawson. The boy must have hit Lawson as fresh blood was found where he had been.

---

**March 22, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**On A Madera Outlaw's Trail. A Fresno Posse Prepared for a Long Chase in Pursuit.** Fresno, March 24. No tidings have been received from the posse that left Reedley last evening on the trail of James Lawson, the Madera outlaw. The officers are all well prepared for a long chase, and the desperado's capture seems likely at any time, unless he should secure arms from one of his retreats in the mountains and should be able to hold the officers at bay. He will make a desperate fight against capture.

---

**March 23, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**They Found Them Not. Officers Return From a Hunt for Regan and Lawson.** Hi Rapelje and Ben Merritt came back last night from a search among the everlasting hills of Madera county for Cliff Regan, Jim Lawson, and Tom Regan, all of whom are wanted in Madera. Sheriff Westfall and Constable Perkins, were in the posse, also went home, and the outlaws can now breathe easy for a few days. Before the officers started for the hills there was abundance of information as to where the outlaws were. But when the officers arrived on the scene not a trace was to be found. Nobody knew anything of the men. They had dropped out of sight completely as if they had been swallowed by the whale that took charge of Jonah. The weather during the two days the officers were in the mountains was very rough. It snowed all day Thursday, and on Friday there was a rainstorm, making travelling very difficult. The streams are all so swollen at this time of the year as to be almost unfordable. Owing to the difficulty of traveling and to the inability to find any trace of the outlaws, the officers deemed it best to come home. When warmer weather sets in, it is probable that a more determined search will be made. There is some question as to whether the men are in that country. It is uncertain whether the mountain residents are assisting the outlaws or are ignorant of their whereabouts. The country is exceedingly rough, and to attempt to search for the men without some trace to start on would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack.

---

**March 24, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**A Madera Outlaw's Bold Run for Liberty at Reedley. Escapes His Pursuers. Swims Kings River While the Bullets Patter About His Head. Gains The Shore Unhurt. The Posse Hopes to Capture the Fugitive as He is Travelling Barefooted.** Fresno, March 23.-- James Lawson, the would-be wife-murderer and outlaw, was discovered near Reedley at 5:30 this afternoon by Constable Street of that place and a posse of four men, who opened fire as he ran. Lawson reached the Kings River, dove into it, and escaped by swimming across amid a shower of bullets. Lawson broke jail at Madera some weeks ago, and since then he has been in the mountains eluding the officers. About two weeks ago he went to a ranch on Kings River owned by a Swede by the name of Strelow, for whom he worked. Strelow did not know that the man was the outlaw until he himself let the secret out. When the officers heard today that Lawson was on the river they went to Strelow's place and found the outlaw at the barn unloading hay from the wagon. Constable Street was asking Strelow where the outlaw could be found, when Lawson jumped down from the load on the opposite side from which the officer was standing and started on a run through an orchard toward the river, which runs only a short distance from Strelow's barn. He had gone about forty rods when his pursuer saw him. The officers followed, firing rapidly as they ran. Before reaching the river, Lawson pulled off his shoes so that he could swim more quickly, and then plunged into the stream. Several times as he swam toward the opposite bank he turned and made fun of the officers, who were firing as rapidly as possible. As nearly as the officers could see their shots did not take effect. Lawson ran up the bank and followed the river for some distance. The country is flat, but covered with trees, and the desperado dodged from one shelter to another until the officers lost sight of him. The foothills come within four or five miles of the river at that place, and Lawson was evidently trying to get into some of his retreats there. The posse pressed after him, and were confident of overtaking him before he could leave the flat land. Lawson was at a great disadvantage, as he was in his stocking feet, and the surface of the ground is rocky. They thought it likely also that he would try to go some house to get dry clothing, when they would have an opportunity of overtaking him. They are now in hot pursuit.

---

**March 24, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson Escapes. Discovered by Officers Near Reedley. Shots Fired Without Effect. Swims Kings River and Runs Bare-footed--Defies the Officers. The Pursuit.** Jim Lawson, the Madera county outlaw who killed his child and attempted to murder his wife, and who subsequently broke jail at Madera, had a narrow escape from capture about sunset last evening a mile from Reedley. He made his escape by swimming the Kings river, and after being shot at several times without effect. About ten days or two weeks ago he went to the ranch of a man named Strelow on the north side of Kings river, and applied for work. There was nothing in his appearance or manner indicating that he was not an ordinary laborer looking for a job, and he was given employment. No one suspected his identity, and he kept his own counsel he probably would have remained undiscovered; but he was indiscreet enough to talk about a certain mine in Madera county, and to try to get someone to go to it attend to some matters for him. By comparing notes it was found the mine he spoke of corresponded with a mine Lawson was known to have in Madera county, and thus suspicion was aroused. The personal appearance of the man tallied with the description of Lawson, and Constable Street from Reedley hearing of it, began working in the case, and was soon satisfied he had the outlaw located. Late yesterday afternoon Street left Reedley with four others in buggies to arrest Lawson. They drove to Strelow's ranch and Constable Street left the others in the buggies, and also left his Winchester, and went to the house to see where Lawson was. He was at the barn with Mr. Strelow unloading hay, and Street went there and called Strelow aside to speak to him. Lawson had his eye on the movement and suspected what it meant. He seized the only chance for escape, and quickly slid off the load of hay and took to his heels through the orchard and was fully one hundred yards away before his flight was observed. Constable Street gave chase, firing his revolver as he ran, but evidently without effect, except to make Lawson run the faster. Lawson was barefooted, having been at work without his shoes on. Those of the posse who had been left in the buggies joined the pursuit, but before any of them could get within shooting distance the outlaw had reached the bank of the river, and with a leap over he went into the water. The river was deep and cold and that was not a favorable place for crossing, but Lawson was across and up the south bank before his pursuers came to a standstill on the north bank. Once on the opposite bank, with the river between him and his pursuers, Lawson took time to send back a few remarks to the officers. He wanted to know what they were after him for, as he was not in Madera county. He then said that if the Madera county officers wanted him they could easily find him, but he had a decided objection to being captured by Fresno officers. He indulged in a number of remarks, part humorous and part defiant, and seemed in no hurry to move on. But the officers were preparing to go down the river to the bridge and cross over. When he observed this he concluded that he had talked long enough, and he set out on a retreat up the river, following the bank. The officers returned to the bridge, crossed to the south side of the stream, and took up the pursuit. By this time it was sunset and there was but little daylight remaining, but they made good use of what little there was, and tracked him a considerable distance. Darkness coming on they returned to Reedley, and again went out, probably with lanterns, and at last reports they thought they were close upon him and would certainly capture him. It is not believed that Lawson has a pistol, and if once overtaken, it will not be difficult to arrest him. Neither Cliff nor Tom Regan was with him, and the gang which was roaming about the hills of Madera county probably concluded to disband for mutual benefit, Lawson striking for Fresno county, and the Regan's going somewhere else. This view of the matter is strengthened by the fact that Hi Rapelje and Ben Merritt returned Friday night from Madera county where they had made a thorough search and had failed to find any trace of the outlaws. If Lawson is accustomed to going barefooted, he will not experience any inconvenience on account of his condition, otherwise, he will be at a great disadvantage. If he strikes for Madera county he can reach there in eight or ten hours, and will again be where friends can attend to his wants. He probably has a gun secreted somewhere near the place he was working, and if such was the case, he would get that the first thing.

---

**March 24, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

The editor of the Madera Tribune has offered certain persons in the mountains \$50 for the capture of Jim Lawson, and says, in case the outlaw is not speedily captured, he (the editor) will go out with a party to search for him.

---

**March 26, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

Nothing whatsoever has been learned from Reedley concerning the pursuit of Jim Lawson. Fresno officers have communicated with that town, but nothing of the chase has been learned.

---

**March 27, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson Chase.** No word has been received from the chase of Jim Lawson. Nothing whatever can be learned from Reedley. It is not known whether the Reedley officers have given up the pursuit or whether they are still tracking the outlaw.

---

**March 30, 1895, Mariposa Gazette**

The officers are having a serious time hunting James Lawson, the Madera county outlaw, and the case bids fair to become only less famous than the Evans and Sontag hunt.

---

**March 30, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Pursuit of Lawson. It Continued One and Half Miles. Some People Inclined to Look Upon It as an Early Fish Story.** What has become of Jim Lawson? At present he is somewhere free from any molestation of officers. The last heard of him was when he swam Kings river and escaped from Constable Street. Immediately after this occurrence the sheriff's office telephoned repeatedly to Reedley for information concerning the pursuit. No one in Reedley seemed to know where the Constable was, and it was naturally supposed that he was determinedly following Lawson into the mountains. But the facts of the case prove to be different. In the first place, Street heard that a man answering Lawson's description was working on a ranch on the north side of the river some distance above Reedley. The officer then telegraphed to Sheriff Westfall in Madera for an exact description of Lawson, which was immediately answered by telegraph. Street then telegraphed back to Madera asking what the reward for Lawson's capture was. He was answered that it was \$25. Officer Street and his posse then went to where Lawson was working and had a talk with him. Lawson suddenly bolted and made for the river a short distance off. He swam across to the south side and stopped on the opposite bank. The river not being very wide at this point, Lawson and Street could easily carry on a conversation. "What do you want me for?" called out Lawson. Constable Street answered that he was wanted in Visalia. "I know what you want me for," replied Lawson; "I am Lawson who broke jail at Madera, and I know you want me for that." Lawson then set off and the constable and posse went down to a bridge below and crossed to the other side. They followed Lawson's tracks a mile and a half and then gave up the chase. According to this Lawson is in all probability up in Chris Evans' old stomping ground. This territory has the reputation of being one of the safest places for the Lawson kind of people. But if a vigorous pursuit were made it would only be a question of time when Lawson would again be behind bars. Sam Westfall, the sheriff of Madera county, says that the salary he receives is not sufficient for him to spend much money on the pursuit of the outlaw; in fact he is unable to make any extended trips to the mountains. These journeys are expensive. But it is said that a new law was passed by the state legislature allowing him two additional deputies. If this is correct it is probable that the pursuit of Lawson will be taken up in earnest. There are many who do not give credence to the story of Constable Street's recent encounter with Lawson. It is reported that he has given several different versions of the affair. One was that he jumped into the river after Lawson and swam half across, but there gave up the race and turned back. Many other queer statements of the affair are reported to have been made by the constable of Reedley.

---

---

April 1, 1895, San Francisco Call

**In Madera's Jail. Desperado Lawson Made Captive in the Mountains. Taken By Surprise. Loses His Freedom While Stilling the Pangs of Hunger. The End Of A Long Chase. For Many Weeks the Fugitive Had Boldly Defied and Eluded the Officers.** Madera, Cal., March 31.--James Lawson, a desperado, who has for the past two months terrorized the inhabitants of the foothills in the vicinity of North Fork, in this county, was captured last night by the Hamilton brothers, who have been on the lookout for him ever since he escaped from the jail here. The last time that Lawson was seen was at Reedley, when Constable Street chased him across the Kings River, after firing several ineffectual shots at him while the fugitive was swimming the river and laughing at his pursuer. After this incident, Lawson was seen no more in the vicinity of Reedley, and the presumption was that he had returned to his old haunts in the hills. This presumption was correct, and Mr. Deater of the Madera Tribune, whose efforts have been untiring in the pursuit of Lawson, sent word up to North Fork to E. B. Hamilton, whom he had employed to be on the watch in case Lawson reappeared in the hills. The message sent by Charley Walker, an Indian halfbreed, was that in all probability Lawson would soon be back there, as the Fresno officers had been vigilant in their pursuit and had found no trace of him. Three or four days ago Hamilton was told by some of the Indians that they had seen Lawson, and that he had been to their camp for food. This increased the vigilance of Hamilton, and last night he received word from Mrs. Noddin that Lawson was at her house eating supper, and for the men to come over and capture him if possible. The Hamilton boys took their guns and horses and arrived at the home of Mrs. Noddin while Lawson was still partaking of the first square meal that he has had for two weeks. Mrs. Noddin heard the men outside, and going to the window, gave them to understand that Lawson was still eating, so they quietly surrounded the house and waited for Lawson to come out. As soon as Lawson had finished his meal he went to the door, and as he stepped over the threshold he looked into the barrels of a shotgun in the hands of young Hamilton, who commanded him to throw up his hands, which he did without hesitation. The other men then proceeded to bind Lawson, after which they took him to their home, where he was watched during the night by two of the men. This morning he was put in the front seat of a spring wagon, firmly and securely bound, and with a man in the back seat with a loaded shotgun, started for Madera, arriving here at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Lawson was lodged in the jail, where he had a large Oregon boot fastened to his leg, which he will probably have to wear till he is either lodged in the penitentiary or set free. He appeared sullen and morose and would converse with no one until he had seen Mr. Rhodes, his attorney, who is at present in San Francisco. Not long since Sheriff Westfall, accompanied by Hi Rapelji, with bloodhounds, made a search in the hills for Lawson, but they were unsuccessful in finding any trace of him, as he is supposed at that time to have been in the southern part of Fresno County.

**Jim Lawson Captured. Is Surprised While Eating Supper. Letter Written To His Wife. He Was Unarmed--Frantic Effort to Escape--Attempts to Kill Himself.** The fate of an outlaw can always be foretold. Jim Lawson is in jail. H. M. Hamilton and his two sons, E. B. and J. H. Hamilton, took him prisoner on the North Fork of the San Joaquin river Saturday night and landed him in jail at Madera Sunday, and thereby earned the reward of \$50 offered by Editor Deater of the Madera Tribune. The Hamiltons are the persons to whom Deater offered the reward. Lawson had threatened to killed Mrs. Geddes, who lives on North Fork, and was in that vicinity when captured. The story is thus told by Ernest Hamilton, one of Lawson's captors: "About 7 o'clock Saturday evening Mrs. Geddes' little boy came running into the house and said that Mrs. Noddin, a neighbor living about a mile and a half from our place, had sent word that Lawson was there. We immediately set out for Mrs. Noddin's, taking the precaution to go well armed, for we expected to have a desperate encounter with Lawson should be he there and armed, as we had heard repeatedly that he was. "We were talking when we came near Mrs. Noddin's place, and evidently were overheard by that lady, for as we drew near the house Mrs. Noddin opened a side window; and in a low tone told us that Lawson was inside eating supper. There were three of us--my brother Jim Hamilton, E. F. Tulley and myself--and when Mrs. Noddin told us that Lawson was inside we separated, each stationing himself in such a manner as to command a view of the entire house. "The outlaw evidently heard Mrs. Noddin tell us that he was there, for we had hardly taken our positions when he bolted out the front door. My brother Jim levelled his revolver at him and commanded him to stop, but Lawson paid no attention. He was trying to reach some brush near the house. "Seeing his intention I ran around the bushes and headed him off on the other side. Lawson acted like a crazy man. He ran up against the muzzle of my rifle, and after I threatened to kill him if he did not stop he continued to make frantic efforts to turn my gun aside and get past me. Finally he gave up and offered no further resistance. He had no weapon. "We then started for our own home, arriving there about 9 o'clock Saturday night. Lawson did not go to bed at all last night, but sat up all night talking to us. About 12:30 o'clock we went into the kitchen to get something to eat, taking Lawson with us. We had forgotten a shotgun that was leaning up in the corner and Lawson made a jump to get it but we were too quick for him. "Early Sunday morning we started for Madera and on the road met Sam Daulton, the man who Lawson has made repeated attempts to kill if he ever got the opportunity. Daulton was about the worst scared man I ever saw when we met him. His eyes looked as though they would start out of his head and his knees fairly knocked together." Lawson claimed when captured that it was his intention to go to North Fork and mail a letter to his wife, who is at present in hospital at Madera. He gave it to Hamilton and later a copy was obtained. It is as follows: "Mountain Dell, March the last, 1895--My Dear Wife Stina: I came back once more to our old home with a glimmer of hope that I might find you here, that we might be reunited, but no, all is still as death save for the birds that sing. Oh, darling, I gaze on our home with a broken heart, through fast-falling tears. Oh, cruel fate, who are you so unmerciful? Once more I ransack the house in every nook and corner, every board on the place, with the hope of ending some sign that you have been here and left a penciled scratch or a little note to cheer my aching heart. I went to little Emma's grave and wept half the night, and prayed that God would show mine enemies or those that thought I murdered our darling the right and light, for they have done me a great wrong. "I could no more help it than fly to the sun. How could I when I did not know it was her before the fatal shot? I knew afterward, but what was the good? I could not recall the shot. Oh, Stina! My grief was so intense I could not shed a tear. A wail wrung from my heart, 'Oh, I am undone,' on that dreadful night, and those words have been true, I am undone sure enough. No wonder I went crazy, to lose all that was nearest and dearest, and all that life was worth living at one fell swoop, and then be shut up in a living tomb with nothing but the thought that another, the slickest villain the sun ever shone upon, was stealing my love and turning you against me. "Lynch me, tear me to pieces, limb from limb, torture me at the stake, but do not steal my love. Oh, Stina, I cannot live without you, and I cannot die without you. But I will not harm you. I pray God may keep your virtues and you from all serpents that will try to lead you farther astray. I do not think you would have left me if I had been careful with you and kind, instead of abusing you. If I had not loved you so much it would have been better. "Come back, oh, come back, and I will cherish you, and never speak a cross word with you; I will be kind and good to you and the children. "The trees are all going to bloom, and everything is just like you left it. Nothing is gone, except a few little things we can easily replace. The mine is rich; I was digging some in it. I can get a partner with a team and soon make some money if the officers will leave me alone. "I did not break jail. I was asleep in my cell, and I dreamed I got away. Just as I awoke the Indian said: 'Jim, George gone.'" I looked and saw the hole, and I went. I was so weak from confinement that I staggered. I fenced up Emma's grave with flowers. Dig at the headboard; there I left a letter for you in a yeast can. Oh, the fairest flower is ahead, but love will live. Stina, let us meet again. Forgive me; oh, forgive me! Let us be happy once more. Your, Jim Lawson." Lawson says that when he escaped from jail he went to the hospital to see his wife, but did not see her. He was there when the officers arrived who were hunting him. He went to the vicinity of Reedley soon after, and worked on a ranch there till the officers tried to arrest him. Then he returned to Madera county and was captured. He had a lock of hair in his possession, and said he had exhumed the body of his child whom he had killed, and cut off the hair. He hung himself with towels after placed in jail, but was unfortunately taken down before he was dead.

---

**April 2, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

Editor Deater of the Madera Tribune is entitled to much credit for the active part he has taken in the recapture of Jim Lawson. At his own expense he employed the men who were successful in taking the outlaw, and the child slayer would not be behind bars today were it not for him. To be sure, Lawson's last letter to his wife sounds much as if it were written by an insane man, but, whether he be a lunatic or not, he should be so placed that the law can take its course with him. Deater played the part of a good citizen in the affair.

---

**April 5, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican** (Portion of article).

**Wears an Oregon Boot.** Sheriff Westfall of Madera was in Fresno yesterday. He is keeping Jim Lawson in the same jail from which he escaped some time ago, but an Oregon boot is always kept on him. Lawson is much discouraged at his recapture.

---

**April 17, 1895, Sacramento Daily Union**

**Six Prisoners Escape from the County Prison.** Madera, April 15. Six prisoners broke jail here last night, Jim Lawson, held for attempted murder and jail breaking, Jim Henslip, an Indian, convicted of murder and sentenced for life, and four hobos. This is the second jail break in two months. James Lawson, one of the men who escaped, is a desperate character. Last fall, while camping on his ranch, he took his gun one moonlight night, and slipping out of the tent shot and killed his little step-daughter. He was tried and escaped conviction on the pleas that he thought it was a wild animal he was shooting at. Early this year he and his wife were at a dance at the mountain hamlet of Belle View. Lawson was jealous of the attentions paid his wife by a young rancher. He called his wife out of the room and shot her twice, seriously wounding her. He narrowly escaped being shot in return. He fled, and after several weeks was captured after he had forced an entrance to the room where his wife lay recovering from her wounds. He was put in jail, but soon escaped with three others. Poses from Madera chased him into Fresno County, and officers of the latter county took up the pursuit. They routed him from his hiding place, but he again escaped, swimming Kings River amid a shower of bullets, while he jeered at the officers. A week later he was caught. He had been in jail two weeks before his escape today.

---

**April 17, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Jail Break At Madera. The Notorious Outlaw, "Jim" Lawson Again Escapes from Custody. Four Prisoners Cut Their Way to Freedom Through the Prison Walls.** Madera, Cal., April 16.--James Haslip and James Lawson escaped from the Madera County Jail last night, by digging through the outer wall with an instrument made from the bale of a bucket. This makes the second time that Lawson has escaped. He was arraigned yesterday in the Superior Court and his trial set for the 14th day of May. Today was the time set for hearing the motion for a new trial in the case of Haslip, who is under a life sentence for the killing of Pasquale Milesi near Raymond on last election day. Lawson was caught two weeks ago, and yesterday, during his arraignment, the District Attorney facetiously remarked to the court that Mr. Lawson had returned from a temporary absence and that he sincerely hoped that he would be present on the day of his trial. Lawson listened to his remarks with a sarcastic grin upon his thin lips. The jail is anything but secure, as is demonstrated by the means which the prisoners used in making their escape. The hole in the wall through which the prisoners left is not more than a foot square. The prisoners chose a place where the band of sheet-iron that runs around the bottom of the cell was joined together, and by digging out the mortar between the bricks soon penetrated the wall. The break was discovered this morning when Jailer Grieve went to feed the prisoners. He went immediately to the cell where Lawson and Haslip were confined, and on opening it saw the hole through which the escape was made. Sheriff Westfall was notified and started immediately after the escapees, but there is nothing to indicate which direction they took. Two tramps confined in the jail also escaped, and it is believed they all went together. The Sheriff had removed the Oregon boot from Lawson yesterday when he brought him up for arraignment, and is it was difficult to replace it they put the matter off till today. As there both have proven themselves to be desperate men some trouble is contemplated in recapturing them. The Sheriff will secure the services of the Fresno bloodhounds to track the fugitives.

---

**April 17, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson Escapes. He and Five Others Break Jail at Madera. Including James Hanslip. An Indian, Convicted of Murder and Under Sentence of Life Imprisonment.** Madera, April 16.--Six prisoners broke jail here last night. Those who escaped are James Lawson, held for attempted wife murder and jail breaking; James Hanslip, and Indian, convicted of murder, and under sentence of life imprisonment, and four tramps. This is the second jailbreak in two months. James Lawson, one of the men who escaped, is a desperate character. Last fall, while camping on his ranch, he took his gun one moonlight night and stepping out of the tent, shot and killed his little stepdaughter. He was tried, and escaped conviction on the plea that he thought it was a wild animal that he was shooting at. Early this year he and his wife were at a dance at the mountain resort of Bellevue. Lawson was jealous of the attentions paid his wife by a young rancher. He called his wife out of the room and shot her twice, seriously wounding her. He narrowly escaped being shot in return. He fled, and after several weeks was caught, after he had forced an entrance to the room where his wife lay recovering her wounds. He was put in jail, but soon escaped with three others. Poses from Madera chased him into Fresno county, and officers of the latter county took up the pursuit. They routed him from his hiding place, but he again escaped, swimming Kings river amid a shower of bullets, while he jeered at the officers. A week later he was caught. He had been in jail two weeks before his escape today.

---

**April 18, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Lawson At Large. Judge Conley Discharges the Madera Jailer.** Jim Lawson and the Indian who escaped from the Madera jail have not been caught. The officers have been hunting for them on the West Side, but without success. Sheriff Westfall brought George Cain to Fresno last evening for safekeeping. Cain is accused of murdering an Indian woman. An Oregon boot had grazed Lawson's leg till a few days ago, when he persuaded Jailer Grieve to remove it. The prisoners were to have been brought to Fresno for safe keeping the very day following their escape. In speaking of the jail break, the Madera Tribune says: Lawson and the Indian occupied the cell on the south end of the row of cells. This cell is not lined with steel except that plates of metal were laid at certain distances apart in the outer wall when the frail structure was erected. They began the work of their escape at about 10 o'clock and by 11 they had succeeded in taking out the brick in the wall on a level with the floor of their cell between the layers of steel plate, and squeezing through the aperture were once more free. They used the bail of a bucket, which they converted into a kind of a chisel, with which they dug the mortar from between the bricks in the wall. A two-inch plank was fastened with bolts at the bottom of the cell on the side of the wall through which they gained their liberty; this they removed before beginning the task of removing the brick, by burning the bolt out of the plank which they easily removed. Jailer Grieve was not aware of the escape of the men until he came to town from his home at 7 o'clock this morning, as he did not stay on guard last night. He left Constable Perkins in charge of the jail, and so quietly did the men work that he was not apprised of their delivery until this morning. Three men confined in the wooden cell of the annex of the jail on a charge of vagrancy also made their escape by prying off the iron bars of the window. Judge Conley made an order discharging Jailer Grieve from further service and to send the prisoners hereafter to the Fresno county jail until a suitable jail can be prepared in this county.

---

**April 20, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**They are in the Mountains Enjoying Quiet Recreation.** Jim Lawson and Hanslip, the Indian murderer under a life sentence, who broke jail at Madera a few nights ago, are probably enjoying quiet recreation in their mountain homes. The Madera officers are apparently not making any attempt to catch them. Sheriff Westfall says that he will not spend a cent in pursuing them, as their escape was due to the carelessness of the jailer, whom the supervisors had placed in that position without consulting the sheriff's wishes. Both of the fugitives are no doubt back in their old stamping grounds in the mountains. The probabilities are that the men will not be caught for some time, and probably not at all. As soon as the snow melts they can cross the mountains and be safe from recapture. This is especially so of the Indian, who can live a lifetime among his people on the east side of the Sierras, and not be caught.

---

**April 23, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

The Madera Mercury takes exception to a recent item appearing in the Republican, in which Sheriff Westfall was quoted as saying that he would not spend a cent for the recapture of Jim Lawson and Hanslip, the Indian murderer. The Mercury says the statement is untrue, and that Westfall has been hunting for the men ever since they escaped. The Republican got its information from persons who claimed that Sheriff Westfall, while in this city last week, told them he would not spend a cent for recapture, as the supervisors had given him a wretchedly poor jail in which to keep such notorious criminals as Jim Lawson, Haslett, Cain and others.

---

**April 25, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Lawson Takes it Easy.** Jim Lawson, the Madera county outlaw, who killed his child, nearly killed his wife and has twice broken jail, is having quite a good time in the mountains, according to a report brought by a reliable authority to this office last night. Lawson's latest appearance was at the Zebra mine, where he sauntered around and talked freely to the boys. Lawson, according to the report, has been twice seen within the past week in the hills around the north fork of the San Joaquin river.

---

**April 25, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

Jim Lawson has been seen in the Madera county foothills. He is said to be heavily armed.

---

**April 30, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**At Rest. Lawson, the Outlaw, Comfortably Located on His Ranch** (From the Madera Tribune). J. F. Daulton was down from the home ranch on business today. He is getting ready to take his sheep across the mountains for the summer. In conversation with a representative of this paper he stated that he had just returned from a trip to the hills in the vicinity of North Fork where he met Jesse Ross, a resident of that locality, who informed him that he had a talk with Lawson at his (Lawson's) house on Tuesday last. Lawson stated that he was waiting to get his man before leaving the country, from which it is inferred that he is awaiting an opportunity to kill Sam Dalton, the man he accused of breaking up his home. From indications, so Mr. Ross stated, Lawson is living at his old home unmolested, and does not seem to be in any great fear of being captured. He has an abundance of provisions in his house with which he seems quite liberal. He has leased the pasture on his ranch to sheepmen for the season. The residents of that locality, or most of them at least, so Mr. Daulton says, are very indignant at the officers of the county for allowing such a dangerous man to run at large and make little or no effort to capture him. It is thought, however, that he will be captured within a short time, as there are certain parties camping on his trail.

---

**May 3, 1895, Fresno Republican Weekly**

**Where Is He At? Denials Regarding Lawson and Regan.** From the Madera Mercury. A gentleman who came down from Raymond yesterday states that most of the reports in the Fresno papers regarding the outlaws, Regan and Lawson, having been seen in the mountains in this county, are untrue. If there had been any parties who saw the outlaws they have been very quiet about it, for the gentleman says that he questioned people who live in the neighborhood of the place where Regan is reported to have been seen, and that none of those people had seen or heard of either Lawson or Regan. In speaking of the different articles which appeared in the Fresno papers, the gentleman stated that they had probably been inspired by enemies of Sheriff Westfall, who took this means of getting even on the sheriff by making it appear that the men who escaped from jail were within a two days' ride of the sheriff's office, and that that officer was derelict in his duty by not going after the men and bringing them in. The gentleman also stated that he had been among the Indians in the neighborhood of Jim Haslett's home and had remained about in the hope of seeing Haslett, but that he was not to be seen. From conversations he had with other men from various parts of the county it was learned that Lawson nor the Indian had made an appearance on their old stamping grounds. It may be possible that Lawson may turn up at his ranch, but they are positive that he has not been there up to the present time, all reports to the contrary notwithstanding.

---

**May 4, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson's Letter.** The outlaw, Jim Lawson, who broke jail at Madera, has not been captured. The officers searching for him found that he had been at his ranch in the mountains, and had left a letter addressed to his wife. It was filled with half insane ravings, and with pathetic pleadings to her to return to him. He has not been seen for two weeks, and it is probable he has left the country.

---

**May 17, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson.** Nothing has been heard of late of any attempts to arrest James Lawson, the Madera outlaw. A rancher down from Lawson's stomping ground in the foothills recently stated that Lawson goes about unmolested, and that no people in the foothills desire to have him arrested. There seems to be considerable sympathy expressed by these people for Lawson.

---

**May 17, Fresno Republican Weekly**

**Jim Lawson.** Nothing has been heard of late of any attempts to arrest James Lawson, the Madera outlaw. A rancher down from Lawson's stomping ground in the foothills recently stated that Lawson goes about unmolested, and that no people in the foothills desire to have him arrested. There seems to be considerable sympathy expressed by these people for Lawson.

---

**June 11, 1895, San Francisco Call** (Date appears to be wrong!)

**Madera Jail-Break. Two Burglars Cut Their Way Through the Prison Walls. Escape in Daylight. They Leave Their Cells While the Sheriff is Attending Court. Citizens are Indignant.** As a result of these jailbreaks four desperate outlaws are now at liberty. One is Jim Lawson, who killed his child and all but murdered his wife. He was awaiting his second trial when he escaped of the second time in company with "Jim" Haslip, who was convicted of the killing of Pasquale Milesi and had a life sentence over him. Neither of them has been heard of since their escape. Citizens are indignant over the action of the Board of Supervisors in not allowing the taxpayers to vote on the question of issuing bonds for the purpose of building a courthouse and jail. Some of the prisoners have been kept in the Fresno County jail until a late period, which has cost this county a large outlay without any good being accomplished.

---

**June 28, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Capture of a Noted Madera Criminal.** Fresno, Cal., June 27.--Sheriff Westfall of Madera County today captured James Lawson, who killed his child, shot his wife, and twice escaped from the Madera Jail. Lawson was trapped by a letter he wrote from Amador County and was arrested in the post office while calling for his mail.

---

**June 28, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson Captured. He Sets a Trap by Which He Is Caught. The Arrest Occurred in Amador County -- He Wrote a Letter.** Jim Lawson, who killed his child, shot his wife and twice escaped from the Madera jail, is once more under arrest. He was caught at Plymouth, Amador county, by Sheriff Westfall, who had gone there on a search for him. The arrest took place at 10 o'clock yesterday morning. The following is taken from yesterday's Madera Mercury: Lawson's capture was brought about by his own foolishness. He thinks a great deal of his little mountain ranch, and this curiosity to know something about it and also to hear something of his wife and children has been the cause of his falling again into the hands of the officers. Lawson's capture, after his first escape from jail was due to his indiscretion in talking about his ranch. He has not grown any wiser, the experience of that lesson seeming to have made no impression on him. When Lawson was in jail here a strong friendship between him and Jailer Saxe existed and one day Lawson confidentially told Mr. Saxe that if he should ever get out of the trouble he was in or should be sent to San Quentin that he would write the jailer, and he wished Saxe to answer the letter and to keep him informed on all matters pertaining to Lawson's ranch and to his wife and children. A few days ago Mr. Saxe received a letter from Lawson, who wrote under the name of "Gorge A. Upton." Mr. Saxe informed Sheriff Westfall, and the latter left immediately for Plymouth, the town from which the letter was mailed. The following is the letter which was sent by Lawson to Saxe: Plymouth, June 22, 1895. Mr. Bud Socks. Kind Friend as your are aware that I got away and fooled that thing of myne what did she do after I left what did the people say how is the sentiment where is my wife is she in the hospitle yet or has she goan to Utah or is she with Daulton the black S B or is she at the ranch please let me know for God sake let me know all you can. You know you promised me you would my health is all shattered I am so nervous I can hardly write do you think thay would shinch me if I came back I would like to save my home stid please write soon. Address Gorge A. Upton Plymouth, Your Efectionate friend, Cal. J. L. After Sheriff Westfall left on the hunt for Lawson Mr. Saxe wrote a letter to Lawson, and it is presumed that the escaped criminal was arrested when he called at the post office for it, as that as the arrangement made between the sheriff and his deputy before the former left for Plymouth. Ever since the escape of Lawson the sheriff and his deputies have been quietly at work trying to locate him. They got several clues, but when they followed them they found they were eon the wrong scent. It remained for Lawson himself to furnish the clue which led to the capture. there will be but little show for Lawson to again escape from jail. He has given the sheriff too much trouble already for that officer to take any chances on his escaping. Should he ever escape again it will be because the jail cannot be made strong enough to hold him and because there is no virtue in an Oregon boot.

---

**June 29, 1895, Sacramento Daily Union**

**Outlaw Lawson.** Fresno, June 28. Sheriff Westfall of Madera County arrived here to-day with Jim Lawson, the outlaw and would-be wife murderer, who was captured yesterday in Amador County. He has twice broken jail and has given the officers a long chase. The Madera officers fear to trust him again in their jail, and he has therefore been brought here, where several of Madera's most desperate criminals are now confined. Lawson is very surly, and will not talk of his experience while eluding the officers.

---

**June 29, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Lawson in Jail. Madera's Outlaw Behind The Bars Again. Brought to the Fresno Prison for Safe Keeping--How He Was Captured.**

James Lawson, alias "Mormon Jimmie", the Madera outlaw, who was captured in Amador county day before yesterday by Samuel Westfall, sheriff of Madera County, arrived on last evening's train in charge of that officer and was placed in the Fresno jail for safe keeping. Lawson was put in a cell in the upper corridor; the most secure in the jail. Shortly after his arrival a Republican reporter called at the jail to interview him. The prisoner stepped out of his cell when the jailer opened the door and with his characteristic wild stare took the reporter by the hand. The scribe had scarcely finished stating his mission when Lawson abruptly turned around and went into his cell again. "No, I don't want to say anything to you," was Lawson's remark. Sheriff Westfall was afterwards seen, and gave an account of the manner in which the capture was effected. The Sheriff was very tired, and his clothing looked as if it had gone through some hard traveling. ARTICLE DAMAGED HERE.

---

**June 30, 1895, Fresno Morning Republican**

**Jim Lawson Talks. He Claims To Be The Victim Of Circumstances. Not Surprised That His Wife Eloped with Dalton--An Old Story Retold.**

Jim Lawson, the Madera county outlaw, consented to talk to a Republican reporter last evening. He was feeling and looking ill; in fact the reporter consented to carry a message to County Physician Davidson for relief from the sleeplessness which has troubled the outlaw for a long time past. There was no mistaking the haggard "hunted" aspect of Lawson's face. The pupils of his eyes were dilated and he was an object of sympathy, rather than horror. His tale, as told by himself, bore the impress of truth, and, if established by independent testimony, might weigh considerably with a jury. Lawson is a man small of stature and comparatively slight physique. His beard had been neglected, and this added to the wildness of his appearance. He extended his hand to the reporter through the little aperture in the doorway through which the prisoners of his class receive their supplies and communicate with that small portion of the outside world privileged to gain access to the desolate-looking upper corridor. Lawson has one virtue. He is fond of home. His home is all he thinks of, though he is homeless and friendless now. Pericles said that the sepulcher of illustrious men is the whole earth. Jim Lawson knows nothing of the world outside of the little shanty in the Madera foothills which, in all probability, he will never see again. He had heard of his wife's elopement with Sam Daulton, but did not look on the affair as an elopement. "He is up there in my home with her now," he said. "There was no occasion for them to elope. They have been together all along." Lawson went on to say that his home is in the foothills, four miles from Cascadel, Madera county, and forty-five miles from Madera. The hospital steward of Madera had told him of his wife's going off with Sam Daulton. "Sam Daulton is the cause of all my trouble," said Lawson sadly. "He sought my wife's company on every possible occasion after I shot my child by accident (Lawson several times repeated that it was an accident) Daulton was with her more than ever. He was with her at the ball in Belleview when I shot at her. He lived about four miles from my place near Cascadel. He was working for a man named Chapin. "Yes, I am perfectly sure that Daulton was unduly intimate with my wife a year and a half ago. She is with him now and I believe they are stopping at the old place. I do not believe they have gone away." Lawson was told that the report had been circulated that his wife had come to Fresno to elope with Daulton, but he did not credit it. "they are not there now," he said. The outlaw became very much excited as he continued his story. "When I shot my wife," he said, "Daulton was there and he shot at me first. The pistol I had wouldn't kill anybody. It was no good. It was a British bulldog." Lawson was asked about his trip to Fresno county, and his escape on the Kings river. He admitted that he had been working there and that the accounts published at the time were substantially correct. He wrung the reporters hand as the latter left the corridor, and seemed relieved at the assurance that he would get relief from the insomnia begotten of weeks of "worry in the wilds".

---

**June 30, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Madera's Outlaw Talks. "Jim" Lawson Attributes His Downfall to a Wife's Duplicity. Since the Outlaw's Capture the Woman Has Eloped With Another Man.**

Fresno, Cal., June 29.--"Jim" Lawson, the Madera outlaw, who was captured in Amador County a few days ago and brought to the Fresno jail for safe keeping, was interviewed last evening. he was shown a Madera paper, in which an account of the elopement of Lawson's wife and Sam Daulton was given. Lawson, at considerable length, told the CALL correspondent of how Daulton was the cause of his downfall. Daulton alienates Mrs. Lawson's affections from him, Lawson said, and was the cause of his attempt to shoot her at a dance at Belleview last winter. AS to the elopement, Lawson said that he did not believe it, as they had no occasion to do so. They are, and have been for some time, living together at his ranch in the foothills near Cascadel. Lawson became very much excited as he talked of Daulton. "Yes, my troubles began about a year and a half ago," said the prisoner. "on every occasion Daulton would seek my wife's company, and this was the cause of the shooting at the dance. Now I tell you Daulton shot first at that dance. I did not shoot until Daulton tried to interfere by taking a shot at me." In mentioning the shooting of his child Lawson repeatedly and decidedly said it was an accident. Lawson is not a bad looking man. He is in poor health, owing to exposure and vigilance in his fear of pursuit. Since his second escape from the Madera Jail he worked at different places through the foothills. In places where he was not known he went by the name of "Jim" Johnson. The news of Mrs. Lawson's elopement with Daulton was confirmed today.

---

**July 14, 1895, Los Angeles Herald**

**Emotional Insanity Plea. An Outlaw Surrenders for Trial.** Madera, July 13.--James Lawson, who so long succeeded in eluding the peace officers of this county, has at last answered to his name in the superior court and announces himself ready for trial for his attempt to kill his wife at Belle View last Christmas. It required two special venires before the requisite jurors had been obtained, owing to the notoriety that Lawson has gained through his many escapes from jail. The questions asked the jurors by Attorney Hodges, who is conducting the defense, indicate that emotional insanity will be relied upon for an acquittal of the defendant. When the jury had been selected seven of the prominent business men of the town, witnesses in the case were absent, and Judge Conley issued an attachment for them, and when they appeared imposed a fine of 5\$ each. Mrs. Lawson was the first witness called for the prosecution, but her direct examination had not been completed when the hour for adjournment arrived.

---

**July 15, 1895, San Diego Union**

**Brought to Trial at Last.** Madera, Cal., July 14.--James Lawson, who so long succeeded in eluding the officers of this county, has at last answered to his name in the superior court and announces himself ready to trial for his attempt to kill his wife at Bell View Station last Christmas. When the jury was selected, seven of the prominent business men of the town, witnesses in the case, were absent, and Judge Conley issued an attachment for them and when they appeared imposed a fine of \$25 each.

---

**July 18, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Luck of Madera's Outlaw. The Jury in the Case of Lawson Failed to Agree.** Madera, Cal., July 17.--The trial of outlaw James Lawson has been brought to a close without a conviction. The jury retired for deliberation at 9:30 o'clock yesterday morning, and remained out thirteen hours, when it filed into court and announced that it could not agree upon a verdict. Two of the men had voted not guilty on the first ballot, and there result remained the same on every ballot that was taken. When the court discharged the jury, after expressing regret at its inability to agree upon a verdict, Lawson was taken to the County Jail of Fresno County to await his next trial, which will take place sometime in September. Raleigh E. Rhodes, the attorney for Lawson, stated that he would in all probability ask for a change of venue for the next trial, as he thinks that Lawson cannot obtain a fair and impartial trial in this county, in view of the fact that he has already had two trials here, and public sentiment is against him.

---

**September 20, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Madera's Criminal Trial. James Lawson Charged with Attempting to Kill His Wife.** Madera, Cal., Sept. 19.--The jury having been selected this afternoon in the trial of James Lawson, charged with attempting to kill his wife, the taking of the testimony was commenced. The first witness for the prosecution was Mary C. Lawson, the wife of the defendant. She related to the jury how she went to a Christmas entertainment and danced with her husband on the 24th of December, and a short time after the supper was partaken of she went outside the kitchen for a few moments and was there met by her husband, who asked her if she was going back to Utah, and when she told him she was he drew a pistol and shot her three times--once in the breast, once in the neck and again under the right eye. Her cross examination was under way at the time of adjournment.

---

**September 21, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Madera's Outlaw Testifies.** Lawson Claims His Wife Had Attempted to Kill Him. Madera, Cal, Sept. 20.--The trial of James Lawson, charged with attempting to murder his wife, is rapidly drawing to a close. The prosecution closed its case this forenoon, and it took the defense but two hours and a half to put on its testimony. The defendant was put on the stand in his own behalf, and stated that at the time of the assault he was induced by his wife to go out into the darkness for the purpose of having Sam Dalton shoot him. Dalton ran and his wife then drew the pistol and shot him, the bullet striking him on the head, where there is now a large scar. He then took the pistol from her and shot her. Calvin Bigelow testified that he had seen a letter from Mrs. Lawson to Dalton telling him (Dalton) that she was going to the trail "heeled" and if Lawson was acquitted she was going to shoot him before he left the courtroom. The testimony of Bigelow was stricken out. The arguments will be concluded and the case will go to the jury.

---

**September 22, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Fate of Madera's Outlaw.** James Lawson Found Guilty of Attempted Wife-Murder. Madera, Cal, Sept. 21.--The third trial of James Lawson ended this afternoon at 6 o'clock, when the jury rendered a verdict of guilty. The entire day was taken up with arguments of counsel, District Attorney Wallace opening in the forenoon, and being followed in the afternoon by Rhodes and Fowler for the defense. The arguments were completed by 4:30 o'clock. This at last decides the issues between Lawson and the State, which have been contested so long, partly on account of mistrials and partly on account of the ability of the Mormon to escape from the Madera jail whenever he so chose. He will be sentenced today.

---

**October 15, 1895, San Diego Union**

**Convicted And Sentenced.** Madera, Cal., Oct. 14--James Lawson was sentenced in the superior court today to twelve years in Folsom prison. The crime for which Lawson was sentenced was that of shooting his wife nearly a year ago. The first trial ended in a disagreement and in the second trial he was convicted. The case has been an expensive one to the county as Lawson has twice broken jail and escaped.

---

**October 16, 1895, Sacramento Daily Union**

**En Route to Folsom.** Sheriff S. W. Westfall of Madera County arrived in this city last night on his way to Folsom Prison with James Lawson, sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment for assault to murder

---

**April 24, 1896, Fresno Republican Weekly** (Portion of article).

**Still A "Bad" Injun.** The residents of the North Fork country were thrown into a state of great excitement three weeks ago by the reappearance of Outlaw Cliff Regan and a pal. They camped with some Indians, whom they threatened with death if their presence was disclosed to any white man. The rancharia at which they stopped is located near the ranch of Jim Lawson, who is serving a ten-year sentence in state's prison for attempting to kill his wife....It is reported that Sam Dalton is living with Mrs. Jim Lawson at the ranch. Dalton's attentions toward Mrs. Lawson were indirectly the cause of the trouble which landed her husband in the penitentiary.

---

**May 8, 1895, San Francisco Call**

**Break From Madera Jail. Highwaymen Laverone and Roberts Overpower a Keeper. Jailer Wells Shoots Himself In an Encounter With the Pair. One Of The Bandits Wounded. Accomplices Have a Horse and Carriage Waiting for the Fugitives.** Madera, CA, May 7. William Laverone and "Jack" Roberts, who were captured last week at a cave near Bates...have escaped from the county jail. Ever since these two outlaws have been confined in the jail, the officers have endeavored to use the utmost precautions to prevent their escape...the flimsiness of the prison had been proven by the escaping of "Mormon Jimmy" Lawson, who at last succeeded in getting permanent lodging in the penitentiary after he had made three successful breaks for liberty.

---

**August 17, 1896, Los Angeles Herald**

**An Escape Recaptured.** Madera, Aug. 16--Jim Haslip, who is under sentence for murder of Pasquale Milesi, an Italian woodchopper, near Raymond, two years ago, and who escaped from the county jail in company with Jimmy Lawson, as captured last night and brought to town and lodged in jail here this morning by Sheriff Westfall.

---

**September 29, 1896, San Francisco Call** (Portion of article).

**"Jim" Haslip Sentenced to San Quentin for Life.** Madera, Cal, Sept. 28.--Judge Conley today overruled a motion for a new trial in the case of "Jim" Haslip, the half-breed Indian who was convicted of the murder of Pasquale Milesi two years ago, in this county, and sentenced him to San Quentin for the term of his natural life. After the conviction of Haslip, and while the motion heard today was pending, Haslip, in company with "Jimmy" Lawson and John Love, broke jail and escaped...

---

**August 10, 1897, Fresno Morning Republican** (Portion of article).

**The Wofford Shooting. Patsy Reardon, His Slayer, Not Very Sound Mentally.** ...When Jimmy Lawson now serving a sentence in state prison, was a refugee and an outlaw in the hills, the story was told of how a young man saw him prowling around the house where he was living at the time, and shot at him, but Lawson escaped uninjured. It was Reardon who told the story of his exploit with Lawson and for a time he was believed, but later it was accredited to the workings of his fevered imagination. His popular name while living in Madera was 'Patsy Bollivar'.

# Mormon Jimmy--Gold, Beans, Tragedy

By William Klette  
Fresno Bee correspondent

**NORTH FORK** — Half way between Cascade and Lions Point, along the narrow dirt track that serves as a forest service fire road, stand the roofless remains of an old stone cabin. On the maps it is marked Pine Grove Mine, but locally it is called Mormon Jimmy's. This is its story.

It was late summer in 1889 that James Lawson arrived in the community of North Fork. He said he was a hard-rock miner from Utah, and the townspeople, who believed anyone from Utah must be a follower of Brigham Young, promptly tagged him Mormon Jimmy.

The next few years are a little hazy when it comes to Jimmy's activities, but he did buy a mining claim from Elmer Goddis. It was along the south slope of Whiskey Ridge. He also turned up with a wife and a baby daughter.

Lawson first built a stone cabin for his family to live in. He next started work on a small arrastre powered by a high-

over-shot wheel fed by water from a ditch that zig-zagged for miles down from the ridge above. He then proceeded to sink a series of shafts and to dig at least two tunnels deep into the mountain.

There is no record of just how much gold Jimmy took out, but the first time he added mercury to the powdered ore in the bottom of his troy mill,

he had over \$300 in amalgam. He next took in a partner, one Ben Norris, but their association did not last long. Ben was a prospector, not a miner, and there is quite a difference. Mining is hard work.

At about this same time, Jimmy and his wife took out a small homestead to the east of Castle Peak, just below his mine. Here, with only a shovel for a

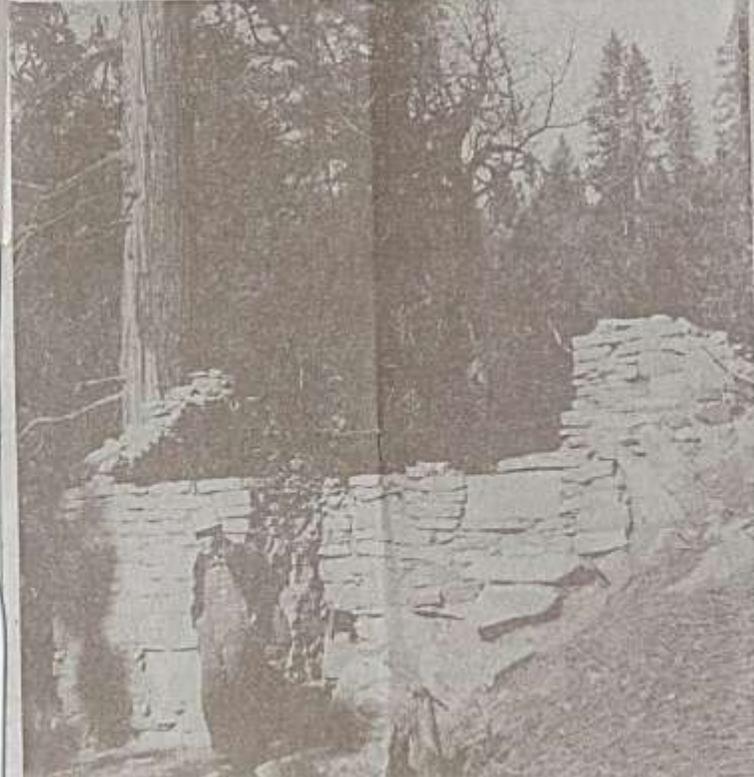
tool, they laboriously raised huge crops of red beans for the hungry ranchers in the valley below.

Then one night in early 1900, Jimmy's world fell apart. He shot and killed his small daughter. His wife, anxious to be off the mountain and away from the long days of hard work, claimed he shot the little girl in a fit of anger when she would not stop crying, but Jimmy said he thought he was shooting at some wild animal prowling around outside the cabin.

Either way, Mormon Jimmy was arrested and taken to Madera for trial. At that time the jail was a small brick building about 12 feet square, nicknamed Ft. Dugan after one of its perpetual Saturday night inhabitants. But the jail had a dirt floor, and Jimmy dug himself out.

For several months he ranged over the foothills around North Fork, once even showing up at a dance at the old Bellview Station, where he angrily took a shot at his wife for not being

See Mormon Page 3-B



# Mormon

From Page 1-B

in proper mourning after losing a daughter and almost a husband. Finally he was caught, tried, convicted of manslaughter, and sentenced to San Quentin.

## Hides Under Tree

But Jimmy was as hard to hold as the quicksilver he used in his mining. On the train to prison, just outside of Lodi, his guard, Madera Sheriff Sam Westfall fell asleep. As the sheriff sat snoring, Jim quietly got up, tip-toed to the back of the train, and stepped off. For two days he hid under the roots of a huge water oak until the yapping of a small dog betrayed him to a posse.

Once in prison, Jimmy quickly settled down to his new life. A hard worker, he so impressed the authorities that they asked the Madera courts to review his case. On the basis that he had been convicted by prejudicial testimony, he was paroled just three years after he first walked through the gates of San Quentin.

Things were not the same when he returned to the mountains. He was older and his family and all his possessions were gone. For a while he worked at the old Raggsdale Mine at the mouth of Pine Gold Creek. Later, along with a friend from his prison days, Emil Modest, he made a half-hearted effort to work his old mine on Whiskey Ridge.

## Refused To Move

When the Kerckhoff Dam on the San Joaquin River was built, Jimmy and Emil were mining along the river. Refusing to move, they were caught in their cabin one night when a storm higher in the mountains caused the river to suddenly rise. They escaped by crawling out through the roof.

This was the beginning of the end. In poor health, the two old men moved to Madera where they both died as wards of the county, in the general hospital.

Following Mormon Jimmy's death, a relative relied on the claim and for a few years worked as the weather permitted. Others cleaned out the shafts and extended the tunnels, but no more gold ever was found.

Today the cabin easily can be seen from the road. Still faintly visible in a rock over the fireplace are the crudely scratched letters, M-U-R-D-E-R-E-D. In a nearby gully, waist deep in icy water, is one of the tunnels. On the hill above are the three shafts.

STORY OF JIMMIE THE MORMON  
written by Gene Tully

Jimmie the Mormon, with his wife and baby came to North Fork from Utah, hence the nick name for "James Lawson" he homesteaded a place near Castle Pk. where raised some garden, stocked the larder with game, most of his activities were prospecting, he was eccentric, temperamental, and cruel. He located a quartz gold claim, upon which he built a log cabin, he proceeded to dig a quarter mile to Saginaw Ck., to the claim to operate a arasta: with the help of his wife, in her spare time it was completed. He then proceeded to construct the arasta, a circular shallow pit, about eight ft in diameter, lined side and bottom with flat stone side and bottom, the stone they carried on their backs from quarry to pit, that completed they began the construction of a water wheel, approx. ten feet in diameter, water powered to operate the drags in the arasta, (explanation) The material for the wheel was all cross cut saw, and ax split from felled timber, also carried on backs and hand sleds, to the claim, then with auger, adz, and hand ax; with these primitive tools, combined with strong backs and hardened muscles, they put that huge together mostly with hard oak pins in lieu of bolts and spikes, and placed it in shape to receive the water.

Jim ran his primitive mill around the clock during abundant water period, when water became too low, he worked alternative the ranch and mine tunnel.

Jim had a reputation of being a hard family master.

Occasionally the oldest Ranger, during his rounds, would ride by and stop for a moment with a friendly "Haleo", sometimes Jim would talk quite freely about the mine and ranch, others he would surley and almost unfriendly.

So went on the time for three or four years.

Warm summers nights, Jim, the wife and little girl slept under an oak tree, near the garden plot, the little girl had her cot nearby Jim kept his shot gun near the head of his bed, on account of raccoons, foxes, deer and other night prowlers raiding the watermellon patch.

It had been reported, that Jim had been pretty harsh with his wife regarding the paternity of the little girl.

One moonlight night the little girl had ocassion to leave her cot for a few monents. Jim obviously in one of his ugly moods, picked up the shot gun, and shot and killed the little girl.

The Oldest Ranger upon receiving word of the tragedy immediately rode over to investigate.

Jims answer to first question, why did you do it? Was, coon and other varmints have been damaging my mellons, and when I saw her out there I thought it was coon, I grab my gun and shot as quick as I could. Showing a attempt at emotions, he endeavored to to alabi himself, pitifully regreting his failing eyesight.

Since the grief stricken and frighten mother refused to talk. The Old R. had no alternative but alay his suspicians pending futher evidence. He graciously assisted in the primitive burial of the child, while watching Jim to make a slip.

Mean time the sentiment among the settlers against Jim was growing dangerous, and rumors of lynching were heard: Jim becoming alarmed, put his pistol in his pocket, and took to the woods.

That left the wife alone on the homestead.

An old bachelor living in a cabin, a mile or so, knowing the conditions, would go occasionally to offer to assist her in some of her work. The Old R. was constantly on the look for Jim; one day he rode to the homestead, after a few pleantrys, he casually inquired if Jim had returned, her answer was no, and I don't know where he is, and if I did I would not dare tell you, he may show up any minute, he may be looking at you now: so I advise you not to come here he may bushwhack you, Old Sam comes up once in a while to help me, I don't think he would harm him, simply to advise him to keep his mouth shut, or else.

Thus the situation continued for several weeks.

Mean time Jim had drifted to foot hills near the Bellview station, 25 miles north of Fresno.

The wife had occassion to go to Fresno, but had no transportation; Sam offered his team and his service for the trip which was greatfully accepted.

On their return trip, they stopped at Belview Station for the night, incidentaly there was a ball schedualed there for the same night.

While the wife was sitting watching dancers, Jim suddenly showed up, from where, no one knows, he came into the hall, and deliberty shot her twice, fortunately not fatally, but seriously, hearing the shots, the men began rushing from the saloon, Sam among them, Jim saw him, owing to the crowd and confusion, the shot went wild; Sam lost no time getting out of sight, while Jim made his escape in the darkness, thinking that he had killed the woman.

Then the man hunt began, for, James Lawson, alias Jimmie the Morman.

Jim wily, and as elusive as a hunted wild animal, succeeded in eluding the officers for several months.

The O.R. feeling positive that Jim would sooner or later show up, either at the mine or the homestead, or somewhere in the vicinity, he was constantly on the look out.

One afternoon Jim appeared at the Geddes Ranch on Whiskey Ck. near Northfork, there being no one at the ranch one of the older girls younger brother, whom Jim well knew, simply paid them a friendly visit, they put placed a quantity of food, which he ravenously consumed; about sundown he thanked them and dissapeared.

The sister hurriedly dispatched the brother to the O.Rs. head qtrs. after being alerted to Jims visit, to the Geddes ranch, and that he left in the direction of the Noddin homestead a mile or west, and to careful, that Jim had a pistol.

The O. R. waited until good dark, allowing Jim about enough time get to the Noddin place. The boy had hurried by the Noddins alerting them that Jim was in the vicinity.

Jim evidently thinking that his presence in the vicinity had not yet become known, he was boldly visiting with the Noddins, with whom he was also well acquainted, and quite at ease, when the O. R. stealthily approached the house. Mrs. Noddins increasing nervousness may have caused Jim to become suspicious, he was preparing to depart, thanking Mr. N. for his invitation to stay allnight, and the assurance that all was well; talking loud to alert the O.R., should he be close in. Jim insisted that he had better be going, Mr. N. slowly worked Jim toward the kitchen door; as Jim stepped out he stepped into the O.R. and the business end of a 45. Hand cuffed he led him to his headqtrs. where he was guarded over night.

The following the O.R. commandeered a horse and buggy, and delivered Jim to the Madera Co. jail.

#### Jims Escape.

Jim became very bitter toward the O.R. vowing if he ever had the chance that he would kill him.

Jim was convicted of attempted murder, and sentenced to 12 years in San Quentin prison.

During Jim time in jail, awaiting his trial he cunningly played the roll of model prisoner, thus gaining the sympathy, and a degree of confidence; he confided his happiness at the verdict, and expressed a desire to be hurried to the prison to begin time, and that he had had enough of law dodging, and would never try it again: all of his scheming paid off temporarily.

The sheriff started with Jim by train for San Quentin.

Some where north of Modesto Jim asked to be taken to the lavatory, the sheriff escorted him to the door, and removed the handcuffs, pushed Jim inside and waited outside the door: after reasonable time Sam the sheriff, called Jim to come out, receiving no answer he tried the door, it would not yield, Jim had quietly locked from inside; Sam hurriedly called the conductor, when the door was opened, Jim had out foxed the sheriff, and had gone out the window of that fast moving train.

Sam was chagrined, but could do nothing until the train stopped at Modesto, where he secured transportation and hurriedly went back, expecting to find Jim dead or crippled and unable to travel on foot, he found neither; a search proved that Jim had vanished in thin air.

Sam, the sheriff swallowed his humiliation and returned to Madera, and reported his loss.

The man hunt for Jimmie the Mormon was on the loose again.

The Old R. that Jim may still intend to make good his threat, was constantly on the alert.

Since the search of the Northfork country brought no results, it was decided that he had made good his escape to other parts.

The O.R. not being content until he knew that Jimmie the Morman was safe in prison.

After of several months, the O.R. received word that a man of Jims description was working on a ranch in Sacramento valley.

The O.R. took leave of absence, and disguised as a ranch hand proceeded to the ranch, and secured a job, he was assigned to a hay making crew, and sure enough there was his man, Jimmie the Morman, he arrested him on the spot, without a struggle, handcuffed him and took him to Sacramento jail, from there he called the Madera sheriff to come and get his man, Jimmie the Morman.

When Jim was safely behind prison bars, the O.R. returned to his duties as though nothing had happened.

And Jimmie the Morman was never seen again.

G.T.