

LIST OF SHERIFFS IN NEVADA COUNTY

COMPILED BY HILARY STEINMETZ IN 2017, ENTERED INTO MASTER INDEX IN FEB 2018.

UPDATED BY LAURA PAPPANI IN 2024.

	NAMES	(Born – Died)	Year Elected/Appointed	NOTES
1	R.B. Buchanan	(21 Nov 1821 – 10 Jun 1855)	1850	According to the 1852 California State Census he was born in Canada. ¹ Per Findagrave.com he was buried in Marysville Cemetery. ²
2	John W. Gallagher	1818 in VA	1851-1852	Per the 1850 Federal Census, living in Nevada City and born in VA. ³ Returned to Virginia and Endicott appointed to take over. ⁴
3	W.H. Endicott		1853-1854	Endicott resigned early
4	W.W. Wright		1855	Killed in office November 1856
5	John Grimes (acting)		1856	Took over after death of Wright until affairs settled ⁵
6	William Butterfield	1831-	1856	Appointed by Board of Supervisors after death of Wright
7	Samuel W. Boring	1823- July 12, 1903	1856-1858	Born in Rushville, Tennessee, ⁶ moved to Illinois, came west in 1849. Served in Mexican War, committed suicide in 12 July 1903 in San Jose. ⁷
8	John Bence Van Hagan	1824-	1859-1860	Born in Ohio, came to California in 1849. Appointed undersheriff by Samuel Boring. Sept. 1859 elected as sheriff. ⁸
9	N.W. Knowlton		1861-1862	Arrived 1849 in California, owned several homes and lots in Nevada City. September 1861 elected as sheriff. ⁹
10	Charles Kent	1834-1890	1863-1864	Partners in several markets around Grass Valley and Nevada City. Elected sheriff September 1863. ¹⁰
11	Richard G. Gentry	1844-	1865-1868	Born in Wisconsin. Elected Sheriff 6 Sep 1865, previously held

		1897?		position of foreign tax collector. ¹¹ Re-elected in 1867. Led posse in pursuit of Wells Fargo Stage bandits, 6 May 1866. ¹² Married to Maggie Murchie in 1865. ¹³ By the time of the 1880 Federal Census, Gentry, wife and daughter were living in Alameda, California. ¹⁴
12	John H. Dickson	1832-	1869-1870	Born in Tennessee, came to California to mine. Shown in the 1860 Federal Census as a miner living in North San Juan. Elected sheriff on 1 Sept 1869 by a majority vote of 477 against Stephen Venard. ¹⁵
13	Joseph Perrin	1823-1887	1871-1872	Born in Connecticut. Came to California in 1851, he was a breeder of horses and cattle at his Forest Springs ranch. Besides serving as sheriff, he also served on the Board of Supervisors and a school board trustee. Died 19 Jun 1887. Deceased left behind a wife and two sons ¹⁶
14	George W. Smith	1838-	1873-1874	Born in New York. Served as sheriff one term. Notorious for shooting and killing Thaddeus Sigourney on Broad Street, 26 Jul 1880, in front of the post office after Sigourney had foreclosed on his house earlier in the month. ¹⁷ He was sentenced to 20 years in San Quentin but later pardoned and released.
15	Calvin Ruter Clark	1831-	1875-1876	Born in Indiana and found in 1870 Federal Census living in Grass Valley, occupation is retired merchant. ¹⁸ Served as postmaster as shown on 1889 list of civil servants. ¹⁹ Occupation on voter register of 1896 shows as miner. ²⁰

16	Wm. H. Montgomery	1837-1885	1877-1879	Arrived in California in 1852 with his father and two brothers via the Plains. Mined first in Plumas County and then down in Nevada City. ²¹ Found in 1870 federal census, living in Grass Valley, born in Delawar and married to Lavinia (born in England), occupation listed as a clerk in store. ²² The execution of George Butts took place under Sheriff Montgomery's term in October of 1879. The sheriff allowed only 40 witnesses at the execution even though throngs of the general public had arrived at the jail to view the spectacle. ²³
17	Elijah Obaihah Tompkins	(1821-1893)	1880-1882	Born in New York, son of John and Laura Tompkins. Married twice, first to Lucy Rebecca Darling and second to Ruth Hillman Butterfield. Father of four children. ²⁴ Served as Nevada City marshal in January 1858 after Marshal Henry Plumer murdered a man. Replaced by Uriah Gregory in 1860. Came to California in 1851 and first lived in Bear Valley. Moved to Nevada City to farm and raise stock with his son E.A. Tompkins. ²⁵ Elected sheriff for two terms. Buried in Pine Grove cemetery. ²⁶
18	R. D. Carter	(1847-	1883-1884	Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, came to Nevada County with his parents in 1852. Did mining first and then appointed deputy sheriff in 1876. ²⁷ Married Nellie McCarthy, daughter of Daniel McCarthy. Served one term as sheriff.

19	George Lord	(1829-1898)	1885-1888	Born in Northern England, came with his parents to Pennsylvania. In 1858, left for CA. Lived in Grass Valley, worked as Supt. Of Idaho Mines, agent for the NCNGRR, owned a livery stable. Father of William G. Lord, businessman in Grass Valley. ²⁸ Buried in Masonic Cemetery. ²⁹ Served two terms for sheriff. However, during the election for the third term, Lord thought he was a shoe in. After the results were made known, Lord was defeated by Dunster. Lord demanded a recount and during the time the ballots were in possession of the county clerk, changed the ballots so that Lord won. He was found guilty by a grand jury of fraud but was later acquitted. ³⁰
20	George W. Dunster	(1845-1907)	1889-1892	Resident of You Bet, married Aug 5, 1868, Alice McCullough at Dutch Flat, Nevada County. ³¹ Was a barber in Truckee and Rocklin. Also served as a Justice of the Peace and Deputy Coroner for Truckee. ³² Elected two term sheriff. Set up by the Democratic party to run against Sheriff Lord during the 1888 election. Dunster won but Lord protested. Ballots were recounted and found to have Lord win. Dunster protested and the court found that the ballots of Boston Ravine had been tampered with so Dunster really did win. According to an account in the local paper, Lord had scratched out Dunster's name on the ballot and rewrote his own name in his own handwriting. Lord was indicted but later acquitted of election fraud. ³³

21	William H. Pascoe	(1841-1893)	1893	Born in Cornwall, England. Married to Mary E. Steele. The couple had four children. Became city marshal of Grass Valley after defeating William Reynolds. Then elected to sheriff and murdered June 30, 1893, by a mysterious stranger. That stranger was thought to be the same person that shot at Brakeman Bruce (James Bruce) in Gold Run just two days earlier. Later identified as Fredericks, a search for the murderer of Sheriff Pascoe ensued for many months.
22	David Fulton Douglass		1894-1896	Served as deputy sheriff under the murdered William H. Pascoe. Appointed sheriff by the board of supervisors after Pascoe's demise, Douglass was then elected again to serve as sheriff. On July 26, 1896, while Douglass was looking for a highwayman, he stepped into a clearing near Airport Road and was shot down.
23	Dana Bullard Getchell	(1846 – 1915)	1899-1902	Born in Whitneyville, Maine. Previously Nevada City Marshal for four terms. Son of former Marshal George G. Getchell. Became sheriff after the murder of Sheriff David Douglass and then re-elected several times. Lived on Orchard Street in Nevada City and buried in Pine Grove Cemetery.
24	Henry Rollo Walker	(1862-1928)	1903-1914	Born in Grass Valley, Ca. to Thomas R. and Elizabeth Walker. His father worked as a miner and was a native of Scotland, his mother was born in New York. ³⁴ Worked as a bookkeeper and was the deputy recorder before he became sheriff. ³⁵ Elected to sheriff three times. Buried in Masonic Cemetery.
25	John R. Martin	(1856 -	1915-1922	Born in England, immigrated in 1876. ³⁶ Married to Eliza and had three children by 1900 according to the federal census. ³⁷
26	William Garfield Robson	(1881-	1923-1926	Born 17 Aug 1881. Married to Frances and later Clara. He

		1948)		became Nevada City Police Chief in 1933. Died 23 July 1948 and buried in the Odd Fellows & Masonic Cemetery. ³⁸ Farmed in Penn Valley and Smartsville areas. Related through his mother to J.E.B. Stuart. ³⁹
27	George Carter	(1887-1953)	1927-1934	Born in North Bloomfield to Randolph and blank Carter. His uncle, R. D. Carter was sheriff before him.
27	Carl J. Tobiassen	(1896-1961)	1935-1946	Married to Mildred Jane Williams. The couple had five children, the oldest of which died in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. Buried in Pine Grove Cemetery.
28	Richard W. Hoskins		1947-1950	Born in England.
29	Wayne Brown	(1915-2000)	1951-1982	Born in Rough and Ready, Nevada County to James and Florence Brown. ⁴⁰ Sheriff for the longest amount of time. Wayne Brown Correctional Facility is named after him.
30	William L. Heafey	(1935-2002)	1983-1992	Born in Oakland, CA to Leslie and Beatrice Heafey. Worked in the probation departments of Alameda County and Nevada County before becoming sheriff. Married to Kathleen Oswald in 1947. The couple had four children. ⁴¹
31	Paul Rankin	(1942-	1993-1994	Worked as a policeman for Nevada City before going to work at Nevada County. Was a deputy sheriff, and then undersheriff before becoming sheriff. Married to Sherrie Dorville in April of 1963. ⁴²
32	Troy Arbaugh	(4 Sep 1948-)	1995-1998	Born in Nevada County to Troy and Patricia Arbaugh. Started with Sheriff's department in 1973 as a deputy. Married to Karen Wright.
33	Keith Royal	(1952-	1999-2018	Born and raised in Sacramento, he has two degrees in Criminal Justice from California State University, Sacramento. Worked

				for Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office and at DMV as a special investigator before he became Nevada County Sheriff. Married to Jeanette.
34	Shannan Moon	(1968-	2019-	Born at SNMH, started with the Sheriff’s Office in 1990 as a Correctional Officer. Father Jim Moon was the former Chief of Police in Nevada City and a Nevada County Sheriff’s Deputy. Is Native American, and first openly gay Sheriff in California. Married to Amy Perez, and they have three daughters.

References Used:

- David Comstock’s Lives of Nevada County Pioneers
- Federal Censuses
- California State Census
- The Union Newspaper, Grass Valley CA
- Findagrave.com
- Ancestry.com
- History of Nevada County by Thompson and West, 1880

¹ 1852 Census: Census Place: *Nevada City, Yuba, California*; Roll: *M432_36*; Page: *314A*; Image: *637*.
² As seen on Findagrave.com,
³ Comstock, *Lives of Nevada County Pioneers*, p. 134
⁴ Thompson and West, p. 137c
⁵ 1850 United State Federal Census; taken at Rushville, Tennessee, Roll: *M432_128*; Page: *311B*; Image 24.
⁶ The Rushville Times, 30 July 1903, “Tired of life at Eighty.”
⁷ Comstock, *Lives of Nevada County Pioneers*; p.437
⁸ IBID, p.237
⁹ Comstock, p.299.

-
- ¹⁰ Comstock, p.159
- ¹² Thompson and West, P. 118a
- ¹³ Comstock, p. 159
- ¹⁴ Year: 1880; Census Place: *Alameda, Alameda, California*; Roll: 62; Family History Film: 1254062; Page: 648B; Enumeration District: 030; Image: 0867.
- ¹⁵ Grass Valley Union, 5 Sept 1869, p.3.,c.1.
- ¹⁶ Grass Valley Union, 21 Jun 1887.
- ¹⁷ Nevada County Historical Society Bulletin, vol.43, no.4, pp.29-30.
- ¹⁸ Year: 1870; Census Place: *Grass Valley, Nevada, California*; Roll: M593_75; Page: 147B; Image: 298; Family History Library Film: 545574.
- ¹⁹ Ancestry.com. *US, Register of Civil, Military, and Naval Service, 1863-1959* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014. P. 438
- ²⁰ California State Library, California History Section; *Great Registers, 1866-1898*; Collection Number: 4 - 2A; CSL Roll Number: 32; FHL Roll Number: 977083.
- ²¹ <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=116314562>, per referenced obituary from the Grass Valley Union, printed on 22 March 1885.
- ²² Year: 1870; Census Place: *Grass Valley, Nevada, California*; Roll: M593_75; Page: 154B; Image: 312; Family History Library Film: 545574.
- ²³ Thompson and West, P. 109c.
- ²⁴ As seen at: <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/f/e/r/Lisa-G-Fernandes-CA/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-0247.html>, 1 Oct 2014.
- ²⁵ Thompson and West, p. 231.
- ²⁶ <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=tompkins&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSst=6&GScty=211&GSctry=4&GSob=n&GRid=116457425&df=all&>, 1 Oct 2014.
- ²⁷ Thompson and West, p. 214.
- ²⁸ Genealogy and Biography – Representative Citizens of Northern California, published 1901, p. 425
- ²⁹ FindAGrave.com as seen on October 8, 2014
- ³⁰ FindAGrave.com: George Dunster as seen on October 8, 2014
- ³¹ Comstock Pioneers, p. 127.
- ³² A Memorial and Biographical History of Northern California, Illustrated:, Lewis Publishing Com. 1981, pp. 250-251
- ³³ As seen on Findagrave.com George Dunster, October 8, 2014
- ³⁴ **Year: 1870; Census Place: *Grass Valley, Nevada, California*; Roll: M593_75; Page: 185B; Image: 376; Family History Library Film: 545574.**
- ³⁵ Year: 1900; Census Place: *Grass Valley, Nevada, California*; Roll: 95; Page: 6A; Enumeration District: 0046; FHL microfilm: 1240095.
- ³⁶ Year: 1910; Census Place: *Grass Valley, Nevada, California*; Roll: T624_90; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 0050; FHL microfilm: 1374103.
- ³⁷ Year: 1900; Census Place: *Grass Valley, Nevada, California*; Roll: 95; Page: 5A; Enumeration District: 0048; FHL microfilm: 1240095.
- ³⁸ As seen on Findagrave.com: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=116465611> .
- ³⁹ Lardner's History of Placer and Nevada Counties, p. 482.
- ⁴⁰ Year: 1930; Census Place: *Rough and Ready, Nevada, California*; Roll: 178; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 0015; Image: 1089.0; FHL microfilm: 2339913.
- ⁴¹ Findagrave.com: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=11500283>, as seen on November 5, 2014
- ⁴² Ancestry.com. *California, Marriage Index, 1960-1985* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007.