

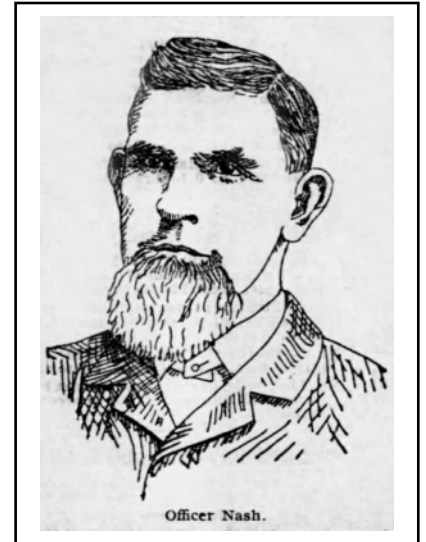
The Shooting of Officer Richard Nash

As reported by the Reno Gazette/Journal September 18, 1891

Shot by a Vicious and Treacherous Mexican Gambler

About midnight, September 17, 1891, Officer Richard Nash was shot down while in the performance of his duty by one Louis Ortiz, a desperate and treacherous character, that has heretofore given the officers of Reno more trouble than all the criminal element of the town.

It appears that Ortiz returned to Reno on last night's train from the west, which arrived after 10 o'clock, and during the evening appeared in the bar-room of the Grand Central Hotel. He was indulging in drink, but no indication of any serious trouble was shown until about 12 o'clock, midnight, when the proprietor of the hotel, Dan O'Keefe, told his visitors that he must close up and requested them all to leave the barroom or go to bed.



As the house was full to overflowing and Ortiz wanted a bed, Tom McCormack, the bartender, offered to share his bed with Ortiz, and took him up to his room and left him while he returned to the barroom.

Ortiz, however, came right down again and showed no disposition to retire, and Dan O'Keefe again requested everybody to get out, and proceeded to close the doors. Ortiz, Toni Welch and others went out on the front porch, where Ortiz sat down on a bench, pulled out his revolver, and without any words with any one so far as is known, fired a shot. The bullet struck Tom Welch in the buttock, and he stumbled and fell to the ground off the sidewalk.

With this Tom McCormack ran out and said to Ortiz: "Put that up! What do you want to be shooting for?" Ortiz made a reply and said: "I want to kill some son-of-bitch." He fired another shot just as McCormack made a grab for his pistol. The ball struck McCormack's coat on the right side, near the lower button and was so close that the coat, a new one of gray color, was badly powder burned. The ball passed through the shirt of the coat and struck Officer Nash, who was hurrying to the scene. The bullet entered his body just above the right groin, and Nash did not at first realize that he was shot, and a few minutes later he said to McCormack: "I believe I'm shot." But he continued his efforts and aided in capturing Ortiz.

Ortiz continued to struggle with McCormack, and fired another shot up overhead. At this, McCormack, who is a powerful man, becoming satisfied that he must be severe, knocked Ortiz down with a well-aimed blow of his fist, and took the revolver away from him. Ortiz scrambled to his feet and started across the Plaza on a run. McCormack followed and caught him half way across the Plaza and again, knocked him down with his fist. O'Keefe came up also and Ortiz was pretty roughly handled by him and would have received more had not officer Nash, who was following as fast as circumstances would permit, reached the spot and put him under arrest. A man named Steele came along with a road cart at that moment and Ortiz was quickly placed in it and taken to jail.

The Gazette reported that officer Nash was taken home, but no effort was made during the night to locate the bullet. Officer Nash was resting easy in the morning, and it was concluded that until the doctors make an examination, the extent of the injury can only be guessed at.

NASH'S CONDITION AT 3 O'CLOCK. SEPTEMBER 18, 1891

Doctors Dawson, Lewis, Bergstein and Patterson in consultation agreed that the bullet almost certainly did not penetrate the abdominal cavity, but was deflected downward and outward. Its course could be followed only for about two and a half inches in the direction indicated. The result of their consultation relieved the attending physicians from the grave apprehensions of immediate danger which would have followed a decision that it entered the abdomen. Inasmuch as its precise location is undetermined, it is not possible to foretell the troubles that may yet arise from the wound, but the probability is they will not seriously endanger life.

Unfortunately for Louis Ortiz, the community at large was unaware that officer Nash was not in serious danger of losing his life. The people in the streets believed officer Nash was on his deathbed.

Officer Dick Nash was a well liked member of the Reno community. He was at one time Sheriff of Humboldt county and came to Reno sometime in the 1870's. He had been connected with the police force of the town ever since coming to Reno, filling the Constable's office for one term during which he made a most excellent record. He was nominated for Sheriff in 1886 on the Republican ticket, and was beaten by L. J. Flint at the general election.

There is no better officer than Dick Nash, and but few as good. He is strictly temperate in all his habits and in every respect a model man. He is as fearless as a lion and if he wants a man, he generally gets him, but last night the drunken brute Louis Ortiz he was trying to arrest came near getting him.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE NOT TO BLAME

A Word of Explanation Offered by the Gazette/Journal

The newspaper, sensitive to the citizen's outrage toward Ortiz immediately came to the defense of Justice of the Peace Linn regarding Ortiz's punishment from a previous arrest. The newspaper published:

“Some people seem to censure Justice of the Peace Linn for fining Ortiz and discharging him when he was arrested a month or two ago for beating a man over the head in Douglas alley.

No blame should be attached to Judge Linn in the matter, for these are the circumstances that led to the fine and subsequent discharge: Ortiz was first arrested for an assault with intent to kill and he was taken before Judge Linn for a hearing. The Judge bound him over to appear before the Grand Jury.

After that District Attorney Julien looked into the case and Ortiz was discharged and immediately rearrested on a charge of assault and battery, the District Attorney fearing that he would be unable to make the first charge stick.

He was again brought before Judge Linn and tried for assault and battery, convicted and fined \$75, with the understanding that he should leave town. Judge Linn had nothing whatever to do with the matter, but simply treated him as he would any other person who had violated the law.”

VIGILANTE JUSTICE ON THE BRIDGE

Believing their well respected friend, and Reno Police Officer was about to die from a gun shot delivered by the notorious Louis Ortiz, a vigilante group began to gather and plot out instant justice for the hombre who will go down in history as one of the first to shoot a Reno police officer, and the only one to die at the hands of a vigilante mob lynched from the Iron Bridge crossing the Truckee River at Virginia Street.