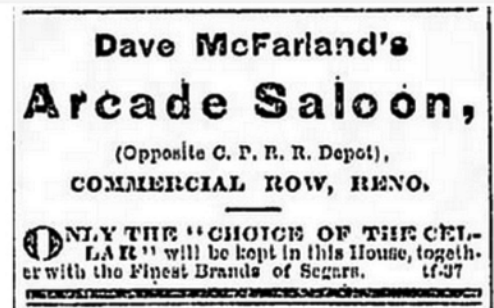


Murderous Act by the "Soiled Dove"- December 8, 1871

Reno continued to grow and was able to steal away the prestige of being the Washoe County Seat from Washoe City. The debate regarding the new courthouse and jail had boiled down to where in Reno to build it. Business was cropping up everywhere including the business of prostitution. While prostitution was viewed by many as an important element to a healthy economy it was certainly not welcomed by all.

On December 8, 1871, when "lady of the night" Mollie Forsha showed up at Dave McFarland's Arcade Saloon and lunch counter she may have not done anything out of the way, but she just happened to be one of those sorry Janes who wasn't to be encouraged outside of a certain part of town. And the fact she was a known prostitute may have been the basis for ejecting her from the premises.

The Arcade was a respectable business on Commercial Row just across from the Central Pacific depot. It had just recently opened and in an advertisement published in the Nevada Journal just days before, McFarland obviously took a lot of pride in his business as he wrote: Only the "Choice of the Cellar" will be kept in this House, together with the finest Brands of Segars (sic). It shouldn't have been a big surprise that the Arcade Saloon didn't quite like the idea of having Mollie's sort on hand to greet—and possibly hijack—the regular customers.



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Thomas Kelly, one of the saloon proprietors, took it upon himself to give Mollie the bounce from the Arcade. Mollie objected. Maybe she was hungry. Whatever it was that Kelly did, it was his last act. Mollie buried a knife in his chest and was led off to jail by Reno constable Charles W. Jones.

Reno being a new County Seat with no courthouse, Mollie was duly tried in district court the following January,(1872) with court convening with dignity "in a make shift courtroom in the rear of Bell & Burke's grocery store" Reno convicted it's first female murderer in a make shift courtrooms. Mollie drew 27 years for second-degree murder.

Noting that a guy named John Stout had received a 20-year term for robbery a few days before, the Reno Crescent Newspaper was moved to remark that, "Our opinion is that in this country life is held too cheap and money too high."

Nobody bothered to report whether Mollie was a good-looking or not, but stories began to be tossed around that there was some "hanky panky" going on at the Prison in Carson City between the warden and Mollie Forsha. A small article in the Nevada State Journal on April 14, 1874 attempted to dispel the gossip. The story read, "There is no truth in the report that Mollie Forsha, aged 27 years, sent to the State Prison from Washoe County, February 2, 1872, for 27 years for murder in the second degree, has given birth to twins."

While Mollie might not be fooling around in prison, she still had favor with some influential people around Reno. Several sentimental gentlemen and one or two high strung ladies got up a petition claiming that Mollie was a victim of unfortunate circumstances and asked that her liberty be restored. How many signed the petition was not learned. Regardless, it worked. The majority of the Board signed the pardon of Mollie Forsha although Judge Beatty and Attorney General Kittrell refused to sign it, Mollie was released from prison.

It couldn't help being noticed that the Deputy Controller of the State brought Mollie to the hearing from prison in a fine buggy team, and now the red-handed murderess and confirmed prostitute is at large again after serving only 3 years of a 27 year sentence for murder. The actions of Mollie Forsha viciously plunging a knife in the heart of Thomas Kelly for asking her to leave the Arcade Saloon seemed to long forgotten.