

## Courthouse Controversy

Directed by Becky Vreeland

Pre-script:

1861 was the year that the County of Lake separated from Napa to form a new county. Naturally, a courthouse was needed for the county seat, and the good folks of Lakeport, Kelseyville, and Lower Lake were all eager to gain this prestigious advantage. To that end, an election was held in 1861 where it was duly awarded to Lakeport. Not satisfied with this outcome, the advocates for Lower Lake demanded, and eventually got another election. This 1864 election also went to Lakeport, despite much opposition. The fierce rivalry continued, very heated at times, and yet another election was called for April 2, 1867. But fate intervened on the night of February 15, 1867. Our scene opens on the smoking ruins of the newly constructed wooden courthouse in Lakeport, February, 1867.

Constable AB Musik:

Ed! Will you look at that! All that work! We just got that courthouse finished! I tell you, it just looks fishy to me. We're ready for another vote in just a few weeks, and somebody does something like this. We have to put a stop to it!

Ed Musik:

That's for sure, AB! As Constable, you sure have your work cut out for you to figure out what happened. And all my tax assessor records were in there as well. I don't know how we can get everything straight unless we can salvage something from those ruins.

Sheriff Bill Manlove:

I agree with you, Constable. There's no way that wasn't the work of some no good lowdown varmint! As Sheriff, I'm gonna help you see that justice is served! Why, those Lower Lake folks just don't know when to quit.

Lucas Willey:

Hey there, Sheriff! I trust you ain't accusing somebody of deliberately setting this fire now.

Sheriff Bill Manlove:

Well then, who are you?

Lucas Willey:

I'm one of those Lower Lake folks who "just don't know when to quit"!

Ed Musik:

All I know is we was sittin' vigil with Doc Downes after that "incident" yesterday.

Constable Musik:

Hey! The Doc was helping me take a couple rowdy prisoners in. Had my gun on 'em, and the dang thing misfired. Accidentally hit the doc instead. It was purely an accident!

Ed Musik:

Mebbe so. But it was bad enough we was on death watch though. Few friends was staying' with him through the night, when we looked over and saw this fire! Coulda sworn there was some commotion around the area just as it was going up. Not exactly sure what we saw, but mighta been a couple of guys running away.

Jim Jamieson:

What are you tryin' to say? Sure sounds like you think somebody from out of town did this to hurt Lakeport in this next election. I think you should watch yourselves, cuz that's just absurd!

Sheriff Manlove:

What's absurd? You know we been through this whole mess twice already. Lakeport won both times, fair and square. What's it gonna take?

Lucas Willey:

I'm not so sure about fair and square! I swear you got the whole thing rigged here in Lakeport! Lower Lake deserves the honor! Why, I heard there was hired men come in just to cast a ballot for them!

Sheriff Manlove:

That's absolute hogwash, and you know it. You people are just sore losers. We got the votes and the courthouse! At least we did until some idiot burned it down!

Constable Musik:

Yup. Those boys the doc and I were hauling off were a couple of hotheads. They sure kicked up a fuss. I didn't recognize them from around here. Pretty sure they were from down around Lower Lake.

Lucas Willey:

Mebbe they know something, and mebbe not. All I know is Lower Lake would make a fine county seat. We deserve it! You'll never prove that this whole thing is some scheme they dreamed up to get it.

Ed Musik:

The courthouse needs to stay here. There's no better place for it. Why, this town is booming!

Jim Jamieson:

There is still another vote coming up in April. Gonna have to house whatever you can salvage from the fire in Lower Lake, I guess. Seems like the question of where the courthouse will be is halfway decided already!

Sheriff Manlove:

Hold your horses, Buster! We'll see about that. That vote will still go on, and the courthouse will be here in Lakeport! And we're gonna hunt down the good for nothin' skunk who committed this crime!

Postscript:

And so, despite questionable results of vote number three, Lakeport did win out. However, there was continued acrimony and a fourth and final vote was held in 1870. This gave the ultimate prize to Lakeport. The courthouse there was rebuilt on the site of the former courthouse building (now the Lake County Museum). This time, taking no chances, they built it of brick and stone.