

THE NORTHEASTERN NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

QUARTERLY



ELKO DAILY FREE PRESS
 LARGEST CIRCULATION OF ANY NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED IN ELKO COUNTY — PUBLISHED EVERY AFTERNOON EXCEPT SUNDAY
 Elko, Elko County, Nevada, Monday, October 13, 1936

Published Every Afternoon Except Sunday
 Wednesday, October 22, 1936

Three Men Disappear From Elko

Luther Jones' Story That Pal Did Killing Will Be Blasted

Luther Jones Will Die During Week of January 24

Murderer Changes Story

Luther Jones Makes Pistol From Soap, Planning Break

Evidence Is Showing He Was Alone

Editorial
LYNCH TALK
 A number of unscrupulous and lawless individuals have been endeavoring to stir up a lynch mob against Luther Jones. It is the duty of every citizen to stand up for the law and to prevent such a mob from forming. The law is the only way to deal with such a criminal.

TRIPLE THREAT TO GEOM
 The triple threat to the Geom is the triple threat to the Geom. It is the triple threat to the Geom. It is the triple threat to the Geom.

Jones States Partner Slew Four Men Here
 Luther Jones tells Sheriff and District Attorney that another man did actual killing. Requests Attorney At First Appearance In Court.
WANTS PRELIMINARY HEARING
 Officers Take Precautions To Resist Any Possible Violence. Victim's Jury In Verdict.

PRISONER MAKES EXACT REPLICAS OF MURDER GUNS
 Luther Jones, prisoner in Elko County Jail, has made exact replicas of the two pistols used in the murder of the four men. He is planning to break out of jail and use the replicas to kill more people.

JONES' CALM BREAKS ENROUTE TO PRISON
 Luther Jones, accused murderer, broke out of jail and was recaptured. He was calm and collected during the process.



Luther Jones, accused murderer, is shown in a portrait.

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Wants Attorney
 Complete Confession Made By Murderer of Four Men; Jones Is Paroled Soviet
 Action Indicates He Will Plead "Not Guilty"

Wants Attorney

Accused Slayer

Four Pleads "Not Guilty"

Complete Confession Made By Murderer of Four Men; Jones Is Paroled Soviet
 Action Indicates He Will Plead "Not Guilty"

Accused Slayer

FREE BUILDING CONTRACTS TO BE REWARDED WITH CASH
 Agricultural Conservation Program for West Branch Is Received. Mark Minkley Agent.

Elko Independent
JONES FOUND GUILTY!
 Penalty Is Fixed At Death In Gas Chamber At Carson City; Sentence To Be Pronounced Next Monday
READY FOR JURY; QUICK VERDICT SEEN
 Defendant Breaks On Stand While Making Effort Avoid Gassing
STICKE PARLEY AGAIN SOUGHT

COMPLETE POWERS ROOSEVELT ASKS RECOGNIZE 'FAIR SHARE' FOR OLDER LABORERS
JOBS FOR MEN OVER 40 ASKED

Luther Jones, Accused Quadruple Slayer, Goes On Trial Here Today; 8 Juror Are Tentatively Chosen
 125 Men Are Included On Jury Panel; 12 Will Be Chosen To Try Accused Quadruple Killer
DISTRICT ATTORNEY THINKS JURY MAY BE SECURE BY EVENING



Portrait of a man, likely a juror or official involved in the trial.

ELKO
MURDERER DIES
 POCKETED

READY FOR JURY; QUICK VERDICT SEEN
 Defendant Breaks On Stand While Making Effort Avoid Gassing
STICKE PARLEY AGAIN SOUGHT

JOBS FOR MEN OVER 40 ASKED

Alleged Killer Testifies His Confession Given in Fear And Not Voluntarily Made

WINTER 1975

THE LUTHER JONES MURDER CASE
 by Gayle Puccinelli

ELKO'S OVERLAND HOTEL
 by Gretchen Holbert

WILLIAM AND ALICE GARDNER
 by Pat Phillips



Elko's Overland Hotel, on Fourth Street, long-time Basque social center. Holbert Family photograph.

ELKO'S OVERLAND HOTEL
A family, a culture . . . and a memory
by Gretchen Holbert

April 3, 1899. Domingo Sabala, a young Basque, only 19-years-old from Guizaburuaga, Vizcaya, in the Pyrenees mountains of Spain, set foot on the soil of a foreign land which would eventually become his. He could barely pronounce the country's name — United States of America.¹

He did not know, at the time, he would never again see the land of his birth or the many loved ones he left behind — his mind was filled with youthful dreams of his new home and a bright, new future.

Continuing his seemingly endless journey, he boarded a massive “iron-horse” to the West — a country with still rough land and characters. He was in the company of other young Basque immigrants, part of a vast influx of an “old country” stripling generation who ventured forth at the turn of the century to seek their fortunes. Initially, they came in search of gold and silver but soon found themselves inextricably involved in cattle and sheep industries.²

Domingo, who Americanized his first name to Dan, found both ventures in Winnemucca, Nevada, where mining was booming and livestock flourished.³

September, 1904. Gregoria Garteis from Natcaitua, Vizcaya, made the burdensome journey across the ocean to join her sister in Winnemucca. She found a job, learned English and fell in love.⁴

October 23, 1907. Domingo and Gregoria were married and journeyed to Elko to make their new home.⁵

In their first years in northeastern Nevada, the Sabalas were involved in various cattle and sheep operations. They started their family, which would become a large one.

In 1908, Dan, in partnership with Eulalie Onandia, built a part of his dream — the Overland Hotel.⁶ It would become the second largest Basque hotel in Elko.⁷ After a few years, Onandia left the partnership and Dan's brother, Antonio, took his place.⁸

Accommodating a steady clientele, the Overland did an admirable job within its limited confines. It was a simple edifice of three stories located on Fourth Street and catered almost exclusively to herders, ranchers and travelers.⁹ The first floor was filled with a cigar counter, bar, lobby, dining room, kitchen, pantries and maintenance rooms.

Upstairs were 24 rooms-to-let, inclusive of the Sabala family quarters.

The ground floor was originally used as a handball court — a favorite pastime of the Sabalas and their boarders.¹⁰

During the prime of the hotel's operation, many sheep outfits were in the Elko area. Many Basque boys came to the U.S. to care for these bands. Nevada's topography and climate were much like their own homeland and the sheep industry flourished, creating a large Basque concentration in the region and promoted Basque hotels to accommodate the herders.¹¹ The Basque hotel became the social and business center of the Basque community, a tradition typified by the Overland Hotel.

Sheep herds were sold in the winter so the young herders boarded at the hotel in the winter, waiting for spring and a new band of sheep. Some had no money but remained with the understanding that they would settle their bill when they went to work. Invariably they did.¹²

The Overland employed young women from the Pyrenees who came to the United States sponsored by businessmen, like Sabala, and worked out their fare. They spoke no English and often arrived in Elko tagged like packages to insure their safe arrival.¹³

Basque women, in the early days of the Overland, were paid \$25 a month, plus room and board. Eventually their pay was raised to \$30.¹⁴

Working as maids and cooks, their days were long and labor-filled. The cook prepared three meals, washed dishes and maintained the kitchen. The maids' chores included waiting on tables and making beds.¹⁵ Many of the girls married young Basque men they met at the hotels, so maids were frequently replaced with new arrivals.¹⁶

Linen was painstakingly washed, once a week, in the hotel bathtub using washboards. All the stoves, used to prepare dining room meals, burned coal and wood. The stoves also heated hot water. At first, the Overland was steam-heated by a coal furnace; lighting was by kerosene lamps, candles and whale oil lanterns. Chamber pots were included with each room.¹⁷

Food was preserved in an icebox, cool box and pantry. Ice was supplied by the icehouse in Carlin, brought in by the "ice-man."¹⁸ The kitchen was a large, functional assortment of butcher blocks, utensils, sinks and large storage bins. Milk came from the dairy in Lamoille and for many years was delivered by wagon by a character named Mary Larson — during Prohibition she often delivered liquid of a stronger sort in her milk cans.¹⁹ Two grocery stores supplemented items family resources did not provide. The Sabalas had their own milk cows, lamb and beef herds, and a vegetable garden.²⁰

Eventually, the "thunder mugs" were replaced with pull-chain type water closets, the old copper washer with an electric appliance, and the



Gregoria and Domingo Sabala built the Overland Hotel in 1908, operating the hostelry until the Depression forced them into financial ruin. Holbert Family photograph.

lamps with electricity.²¹

During the first few years of operation, the hotel had a running advertisement quoting rates at 25c to 50c for “new rooms.”²² Board and room were generally one to two dollars during the late Twenties and Thirties. Drinks at the bar sold at eight to ten for a dollar.²³

In an era of male chauvinism, women were **not** welcome in the barroom. However, they were treated to lemonade, grenadine and soda, or, for the more daring, sherry or panash (half beer and half soda). These concoctions were served to the “fairer sex” in the dining room on special occasions.²⁴

Traditional holidays and special festivities were highlights of an otherwise work-oriented year. New Year’s Eve was always celebrated at the Star Hotel and Three Kings’ Feast at the Overland. The proprietors’ birthdays were gala events. Weddings and wakes were both common celebrations.²⁵

On these days, everyone was invited to a sumptuous feast—the food was free, the drinks were not.²⁶ Dancing was enjoyed after dinner, usually to live accordion music. Card games and dancing contests were popular. The Overland also catered to private parties. Dances were organized and alternated each week at the different hotels.²⁷

In the Twenties and Thirties when there was no Catholic Church to speak of in Elko, weddings, confirmations and baptisms were often performed in the lobby of the hotel. Until the establishment of the Arnold Mortuary, rosaries were said and bodies sometime lay in state there.²⁸

During Prohibition, Sabala maintained a speak-easy, complete with a discreet entrance through the alley. The bar was part of a vast underground of illegal drinking places — when the “prohibes” were on their

way to the raid the Overland word was relayed in time to hide the evidence.²⁹

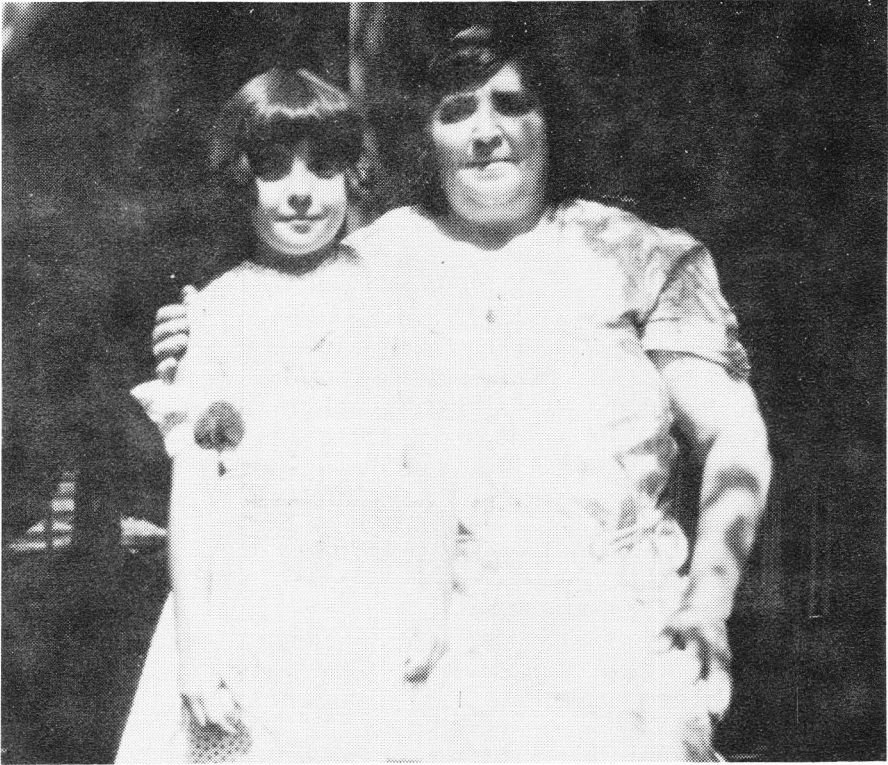
Gregoria, through necessity and because of Elko's poor hospital situation, became a practicing midwife. She would bring life into the world by, using her own words, "rural free delivery." Many contemporary Elkoans were born in the upper chambers of the Overland.³⁰

Since the shepherders were young and foreign to the "odd" American ways, Gregoria took them under her wing, acting as mother, counselor and nurse, all wrapped in one compassionate package. They would often query her at dinner as to the meaning of some English words. Sometimes she would not know the word from her adopted language, but, always wanting to please, would make up one to tell the credulous herders. All around the hotel and later through the Basque community, one of these contrivances became gospel. This word was "bufalari," which was supposed to mean to expel flatus in English — the young herders readily accepted her invented word.³¹

Church, mortuary and hospital — the Overland owners dealt with major and minor crises. Such was the case when the nationwide influenza epidemic hit Elko during World War I. The Overland's halls and rooms were filled to overflowing with fifty to sixty stricken people. Gregoria



Sabala Family (left to right) — Ray, Pete, Domingo, Frank, Mary Ann, Gregoria, Sarah, Augustine and Ann. Holbert Family photograph.



Youngest daughter, Lenore, with Gregoria Sabala. Holbert Family photograph.

manned the task force that worked day and night to nurse them back to health — their efforts paid off, no one was lost.³²

This was a typical gesture of the Sabala family. Dan was one of the financial, religious and cultural leaders in the Basque community. He was always concerned about others and was immensely proud of his Basque heritage.³³

An anthology of Basque families in the western United States published early in the century says of him: “Domingo Sabala has established himself in a prominent position and is directly identified with the industry and upgrading of the community (Elko).”³⁴

From his arrival in America with nothing but the clothes on his back and a dream he had become one of the most respected and successful of Elko’s large Basque population. He was self-made and had earned his fortune with hard work. After he succeeded in sending his two oldest sons to college, Frank to Notre Dame and Ray to Santa Clara University, it appeared his success in the new land was insured.³⁵ But, by now, the nation was in the throes of the Depression — a grim, crucial time.

When the banks closed and the stock market crashed, Domingo lost everything, right along with most others. In a matter of weeks more than thirty years’ work was erased from the ledger — he lost his hotel, theatre, various properties, cattle, sheep, stock and mining claims — and became

a maintenance man at the Elko County Courthouse to support the family.³⁶ At age 57 he started all over again, working at assorted jobs, including bartender, railroad worker and laborer.³⁷

His faded dream, the Overland Hotel, was bought in 1938 by Jack Hunter, who, in turn, leased it to Kenneth Scott. Scott renovated it, installing a new steam heat system and new furniture. He opened for business on March 28, 1938, renting rooms and managing the Overland Bar in a partnership.³⁸

When Scott gained ownership of the Overland, he discovered a large safe. It contained a collection of locked compartments which had once served as safety deposit boxes for patrons during Sabala's management. The keys had long since been lost so the safe was "cracked," under the supervision of two bank officials. Since that time Scott has been attempting to locate the owners of long-forgotten documents, money, jewels and bonds. At this writing, some of the people still have not been found. If a Sabero Govia is still alive, and reads this, he may still collect his deeds, contracts, personal letters and effects from Scott, who is still holding the belongings.³⁹

After 20 years of operation, Scott sold the hotel to Red Ellis, Dick Warren and Sid Winner in 1957.⁴⁰ Today, it is an annex of the Commercial Hotel, part of the Anacabe Building.⁴¹

Domingo and Gregoria gave life to eight children. Two of them, Frank and Ray, have died and are buried in Elko. Mary Ann Brown, Sarah Oregon, Anna Tremewan, Pete Sabala, Augustine Shope and Lenore Holbert survive.

Domingo and Gregoria began a new life when they came to their new, strange country and lived to see the realization, and destruction, of their dreams. They have since died, within two years of one another, but are still together, side by side, resting in the Elko Cemetery — within a block of where four of their grandchildren go to school.

Domingo and Gregoria are gone, the Overland Hotel is gone, two of their children are dead, but memories remain — those whose lives were touched by the Sabalas remember.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Sol Silen, *La Historia de Los Vascongado en el Oeste*. Las Novedades, New York, 1917. p. 319.

² Adrien Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans L'Quest Amercain*. Ezkila, Bordeaux, 1955. p. 85.

³ Lenore Holbert, interview with author April 23, 1974.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Silen, *La Historia*.

⁶ Pete and Mathilde Jauregui, interview with author April 29, 1974.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

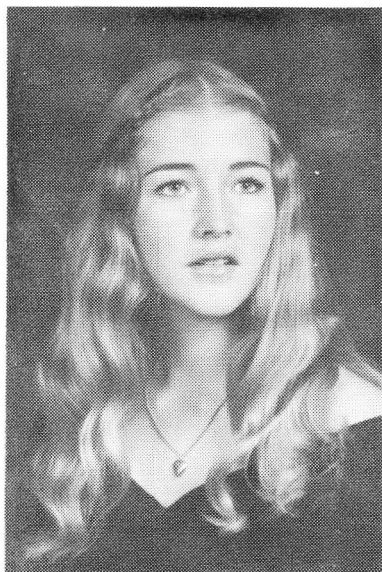
¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Gachiteguy, *Les Basques*.

- ¹² Jauregui.
¹³ **ibid.**
¹⁴ **ibid.**
¹⁵ **ibid.**
¹⁶ **ibid.**
¹⁷ Holbert.
¹⁸ **ibid.**
¹⁹ **ibid.**
²⁰ **ibid.**
²¹ **ibid.**
²² **Elko Daily Free Press:** January-June, 1909.
²³ Jauregui.
²⁴ **ibid.**
²⁵ **ibid.**
²⁶ **ibid.**
²⁷ Anna Hachquet, interview with author May 19, 1974.
²⁸ Holbert.
²⁹ **ibid.**
³⁰ **ibid.**
³¹ **ibid.**
³² Hachquet.
³³ **ibid.**
³⁴ Silen, **La Historia.**
³⁵ Anna Tremewan, interview with author May 20, 1974.
³⁶ **ibid.**
³⁷ **ibid.**
³⁷ Kenneth Scott, interview with author May 18, 1974.
³⁹ **ibid.**
⁴⁰ **ibid.**
⁴¹ Holbert.

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 Gachiteguy, Adrien. **Les Basques dans L'quest American.** Ezkila, Bordeaux, 1955.
 Anna Hachquet, a family friend in an interview with the author on May 19, 1974.
 Lenore Holbert, Sabala daughter in an interview with the author on April 23, 1974.
 Pete and Mathilde Jauregui, former owners of the Star Hotel, Elko, in an interview with the author on April 29, 1974.
 Kenneth Scott, former owner of the Overland Hotel and Bar, in an interview with the author on May 18, 1974.
 Silen, Sol. **La Historia de Los Vascongados en el Oeste.** Las Novedades, New York, 1917.
 Anna Tremewan, Sabala daughter in an interview with the author on May 20, 1974.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . . GRETCHEN HOLBERT

Gretchen Holbert, reigning Miss Elko County and pre-law student at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, wrote this monograph about her grandparents for an English and Rhetoric course at Northern Nevada Community College. She was one of several local high school students allowed to take the class.

She was born in Cedar City, Utah, May 7, 1956, and attended schools in Elko and several communities in Southern California. She graduated from Elko High School in 1974. The author is the daughter of Lenore Holbert of Elko and Dr. Robert Holbert of San Diego.

Editor's comments: Family histories are vital facets of total history offering more personal views and emotions of personalities — those who make history. The Sabala story relates directly to Elko's Basque community, an important part of the social and economic structure of the community.

Gretchen's paper was one of several read at the college and museum sponsored symposium in 1974 — an important and needed source of **Quarterly** articles. English and rhetoric students and instructors at the community college are supplied with a list of subjects from the museum, most suggested by Northeastern Nevada's resident historian, Edna Patterson. Many of the undergraduates use the museum's growing research and newspaper files and library while compiling and writing their papers.

The staff and board of the museum and historical society thank Gretchen for allowing us to publish her paper.