



Women in Union Cemetery: Mollie Carpenter

The women featured in this series of articles are part of the Women in Union Cemetery Tour conducted by Mike Roberts in 2024.

Mollie Carpenter 1866 – 1923

Buried in Placerville Union Cemetery, Section 19 Block 42 Plot C

Portrayed by Kathy Drew, Save the Graves 2019 event

Mollie Carpenter was a pioneer female journalist who eventually became the editor and publisher of the Mountain Democrat newspaper. She was the daughter of powerful local politician Gideon Judd (GJ) Carpenter, a Georgetown miner who became variously speaker of the assembly, clerk of the supreme court, and a railroad commissioner in an era when Placerville belatedly gained rail service.

Mollie was born in Georgetown but grew up in Placerville because, in addition to his political pursuits, her father owned a newspaper in Placerville, The Mountain Democrat.

Like several of her peers in Placerville's small town social scene, Mollie was very musical. By 9 she was playing organ in the Methodist Church. She started singing in church at 12, and never stopped.

Mollie was public school educated in Placerville until high school, when girls in her socio-economic class attended the private Conklin Academy, which pre-dated the Ivy House and later, its parking lot. In 1885, she traveled east to attend the prestigious Wellesley College, and on to the even more prestigious Boston Conservatory of Music. These were some of the first schools of their kind and remain some of the best.

Despite her education and obvious talent, she never pursued music as a profession. She said she missed her home and family. Instead, she returned to Placerville and went to work for her father as a reporter, often working beside her childhood friend Bine Ingham. By 1902, Mollie took over as publisher of the Mountain Democrat. In 1905, her father gave her the publication. She remained editor and/or publisher for the next 20 years.

Her father's political life took him, and sometimes Mollie, to San Francisco. On one such trip in 1906, she was jostled out of bed by a violent earthquake. She later said, "I thought I would die." But she

stuck around for several days and dutifully recorded the horror the SF earthquake and subsequent fire wrought.

By 1910, former Mountain Democrat printer, reporter, business manager and publisher Bine Ingham joined Mollie as co-publisher and remained in that capacity for the next 11 years.

The two resided together on Bedford Ave and were inseparable. they were much in demand as a vocal duet for weddings and funerals. Along with several other prominent women, they become the heart of an active culture scene. In Placerville! In fact, Mollie loved costume parties! apparently, she was a great gypsy countess and a mean Martha Washington.

Bine passed away suddenly in 1921. A year later Mollie's health declined. She leases, then later sells the paper to long-time press man Clarence Barker, whose family ran the business until 1964. They sell to newspaper conglomerate McNaughton News, which has local publications up and down the CA valley and still operates the Mountain Democrat.

Interpretation by Mike Roberts, 2024

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