



# STOCKTON POLICE DEPARTMENT'S "NEW" BLUE NOTES

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## THE BRISCOE BOYS

No person now living knew Officer John L. (Jack) Briscoe, so I can't tell you he had a happy go lucky personality, or that he came across as thoughtful or funny. Like all of us, he no doubt was a combination of these traits. I am sure that he was someone we would be proud to know. Briscoe was appointed to the Department in 1912. His father, Michael Briscoe, a City Councilman, may have helped in that, but at 6'0 and almost 200 pounds, Jack was a large fellow in a time when the average man stood between 5'4" and 5'8". In 1912, being what we now call a "plus" size was a prerequisite for being a successful Police Officer - that and being of Irish descent.

With fewer than 30 officers covering our growing city, the Police Officer had to be able to "walk tall" wherever he went. Without vehicles and instant communication, working alone in some of the darker corners of a wide open city, Stockton officers needed the same presence as the Texas Rangers - whose motto was "One Riot - One Ranger". From all records, Jack Briscoe was cut from that cloth.

Jack and his wife, Amelia, had four sons; John, Elmer, Robert and Alvin. They all lived in a modest home at 144 East Anderson Street. Jack caught the streetcar for work at Anderson and El Dorado Streets. It carried him north to the Police Office located in the ground floor of the Masonic Temple, a four story brick building which stood at the corner of El Dorado and Bridge place, behind the Hotel Stockton.

On February 5, 1917 about half way through his shift, Briscoe came up behind two noisy panhandlers in front of the 49er Saloon, at Miner and El Dorado Streets. Briscoe had already received several complaints about these two fellows. He glided up behind them, took them by the arm and advised that they would be heading to the Police Station for a talk. Everything went well until they neared the Station on Bridge Place. One of Briscoe's prisoners pulled away from him and swiveled around. The prisoner pulled a .38 revolver from his pocket and fired a shot at the officer. Briscoe pulled his .32 service revolver and returned fire - shooting three times. Briscoe had been struck just above the third button of his uniform jacket - the round penetrated his heart, and our Officer collapsed in front of the alley between the Police Office and the B&M Building.

Briscoe left a widow with four sons. Mrs. Briscoe was awarded a pension by the City and was the first person to receive benefits from the Stockton Police Widows and Orphan's Aid Association - which today is known as the Stockton Police Officer's Association. Raising four boys was a challenge for Amelia, but she had help - the Stockton Police Force!

The Briscoe boys were precocious youngsters. They got into their share of pranks. Though always at their elbows were their Dad's partners. More than once they were driven home when found doddling along as the day grew longer and night approached. Those surrogate Dads from the Police Department made the Briscoe boys aware that they were indeed a special group. The Brothers were always admonished by their Mother not to do anything their Dad would not be proud of.

Those four boys grew into solid citizens. John became a lawyer, serving as a San Joaquin County District Attorney and Public Defender. Elmer, a Deputy Sheriff - rising to the rank of Lieutenant before moving to Reno, Nevada to become Chief of Police. Robert became President of a local Title Insurance Company, and Alvin retired as an Agent for the California Office of Alcoholic Beverage Control.

I did not know all of the Briscoe brothers, only Elmer and Robert. The other two brothers passed away before I became well acquainted with the family. It was Elmer, I am proud to say was my friend. He was a talkative, intelligent man. Always interested in everyone he met, with a great sense of humor, Elmer was always ready with an amusing tale or a joke, and was very proud of his three daughters, and his lovely wife, Marge.

Elmer was the epitome of professional law enforcement. Always polite and interested in people, unafraid to step up to trouble when necessary. "The Chief" as he was known, could tell stories for hours, and often did. I always found it a pleasure to listen to him. He left a positive impression on all those he touched. Interestingly enough, our own Chief Morris grew up across the street from Elmer on Stockton's Calhoun Way. No doubt Elmer influenced our Chief's interest in Law Enforcement by continually driving home with the spinning red lamp on the roof of his car lighting up the neighborhood!

The Briscoe boys did their Mom and Dad proud, and stand as one of the proudest memories of the S.P.D..



**Left Photograph:** Dressed in Police Uniforms made by their Mother, Amelia. John and Elmer Briscoe arrest Brother Robert using their Father's handcuffs. According to Elmer Briscoe, Robert was mad he did not have a uniform yet and did not want to play. Brother Alvin is absent, his uniform was still on the cutting table.

**Right Photograph:** Elmer Briscoe presents Chief Julio Cecchetti and the Stockton Police Department with the service revolver of John Briscoe, with which he returned fire on his assailant February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1917. Currently arrangements are being made to place the revolver in the Stockton Police Officer's Association Museum. Watch for its appearance there soon!!!

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