

# Who?

## Who was Julia Bulette?

Julia Bulette (1832 – January 19/20, 1867), was an English-born American prostitute in Virginia City, Nevada, a boomtown serving the Comstock Lode silver mine. Her elegant brothel, highly popular with the miners, inspired a long-running legend.

Juliette “Julie” Bulette was born in London and moved to New Orleans in the late 1830s. By 1853, she moved to California and eventually arrived in 1859 in Virginia City, NV, a mining boomtown since the Comstock Lode silver strike. As she was the only woman in the area, she became greatly sought after by the miners. She quickly took up prostitution. She was described as having been a beautiful, tall, and slim brunette with dark eyes, she was refined in manner with a humorous, witty personality.

"Jule" Bulette lived and worked out of a small rented cottage near the corner of D and Union streets in Virginia City's entertainment district. An independent operator, she competed with the fancy brothels, streetwalkers, and hurdy-gurdy girls for meager earnings.

She was also a good friend to the miners, who adored her. Bulette supported the miners at times of trouble and misfortune, once turning her Palace into a hospital after several hundred men became ill from drinking contaminated water. She nursed the men herself. Once when an attack by local American Indians appeared imminent, she chose to remain behind with the miners instead of seeking shelter. She also raised funds for the Union cause during the American Civil War. The firefighters made her an honorary member of Virginia Engine Number 1. She was elected the Queen of the Independence Day Parade, and she rode Engine Company Number One's fire truck through the town wearing a fireman's hat and carrying a brass fire trumpet filled with fresh roses. She donated large sums for new equipment and often personally lent a hand at working the water pump.

On January 20, 1867, Bulette's partially naked body was found by her maid in her bedroom. She had been strangled and bludgeoned. John Millain, a French drifter, was charged with the crime. On April 24, 1868, he went to the gallows, swearing he was not guilty, but had been only an accomplice in the theft of her meager belongings.

Millain's hanging was witnessed by author Mark Twain.

With few details of her life, twentieth-century chroniclers elevated the courtesan to the status of folk heroine, ascribing to her the questionable attributes of wealth, beauty, and social standing. In reality, Bulette was ill and in debt at the time of her death.

