

Michael Carbis

Michael Carbis was christened 3 April 1831 in Chacewater, Cornwall, England. He was the son of Michael Carbis and Mary Ann Solomon. By 1841, the family of nine children was living in Kenwyn, Cornwall, England.¹ When Michael was age 16, his father died.² The family was living in Kea, Cornwall, England. On the 1851 census Michael was a tin miner, age 20, and the family was living on Cross Lane in Kea.³

Michael immigrated on the packet ship *Waterloo* from Liverpool to New York City in 1853 with his older brother William, both miners.⁴ Michael must have returned to England since he married Mary Ann Odgers in 1858 in Baldhu, Cornwall, England.⁵ They then traveled from Liverpool to New York City in April 1859 on the ship *City of Washington*. They settled in California and eventually had five children, three of whom died young.

In 1860, Michael and his wife and baby son were living in Chips Township, Sierra, California.⁶ By 1870, they were living in Virginia City, Storey, Nevada. There were two boarding miner living with them, one of whom would eventually become Mary Ann's second husband.⁷ In 1875 the family made another trip to England, returning from Liverpool to New York on the ship *Manhattan*, ending up in Lincoln, Nevada.⁸

In 1878, the family moved to Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory⁹, where on the 1880 census Michael was a miner.¹⁰ He was also the mine foreman at the Stormont Mining Company. That year, notice was given that the miners' wages would be reduced. The union refused to accept the news, put out the fires at the reduction works, and stopped work at the mines.

In October 1880, Superintendent Johnson Vivian (who would be Mary Ann's second husband) asked mine foreman Michael Carbis to fire Tom Forrest, a mine agitator. Forrest was angry, and waylaid Carbis later and stabbed him. A newspaper described the event: "As Michael Carbis, foreman of the California Mine, was on his way to work he was stopped near the Buckeye boarding house by a miner name Tom [Forrest], who had a revolver in his hand. When the latter got within a few feet of Carbis he put away the pistol, but immediately drew a large sheath knife and plunged it into Carbis' side, inflicting a frightful wound, from the effects of which he died last evening about 5 o'clock. It was a deliberate, cold-blooded murder."¹¹

Another newspaper account explains: "For refusing to perform his work properly Carbis reported Forrest to the foreman of the mine, who discharged him. Forrest had previously made threats to "give him a game" if he reported him, and a day or so following met Carbis as he was proceeding to his daily labor and present a pistol at him, at the same time using very profane language and telling him

¹ England and Wales Census, 1841.

² *Familysearch.org*

³ England and Wales Census, 1851.

⁴ New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957.

⁵ England Marriages, 1538-1973; England and Wales Marriage Registration Index, 1837-2005.

⁶ United States Census, 1860.

⁷ United States Census, 1870.

⁸ Nevada State Census, 1875.

⁹ Transcript by Dorothy Carbis Peay, *Familysearch.org*

¹⁰ United States Census, 1880.

¹¹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 5 October 1880, p. 3.

to come into a cabin nearby where they could settle “that little affair.” Carbis replied that he had nothing to settle and desired to be unmolested, as what he had done had been purely in discharge of his duty, and not for any other cause. Finally, Forrest put up his pistol, but just as Carbis turned to leave Forrest suddenly drew a huge bowie knife and plunged it to the hilt in the right side just below the short ribs, bringing Carbis instantly to the ground. Forrest lingered a few moments over the man thus assassinated, then fled into an old tunnel but was immediately captured.”¹²

“Deputy Sheriff Hoag is deserving of considerable credit for the courage displayed in pursuing him. Forrest held a pistol and knife and threatened to kill the first man who should come into the tunnel. Hoag jocularly remarked that his ‘bread basket’ would hold more lead than was in his pistol and still be hungry. ‘Twas only by strategy that Sheriff Hardy was enabled to leave the Reef with the prisoner, having circulated the report that the examination would be held at 4 pm instead of which 11 am was the hour. Then men stood at each door of the court room armed with double-barreled shotguns. Being then taken back to jail the stage was driven around much earlier than usual, and before any were aware of the fact, the prisoner was enroute for St George, under a guard of men determined to deliver him safely.”¹³

Michael was admired and there were open threats of lynching. The camp was in mourning and all mines were closed the afternoon of the funeral. “A large and most respectable cortege followed the corpse ... to the grave. The number in carriages, on horse and on foot is estimated at 500. The scene at the grave was heart-rending and few there were who were not in tears. The young daughter was nearly bereft of sense and physical power.”¹⁴

“The same night... a party of sixteen masked men came and demanded the prisoner, but were met with the remark ‘not while I have a drop of blood left in my body.’ Hardy was then overpowered and the keys taken from him and left in charge of one of the gang while the balance went below to the cells. Two of them soon returned and compelled the guard to go down and show them which cell the prisoner was in. After which he also was placed in charge of a man (all were armed to the teeth). The next seen by Sheriff Hardy was the gang coming out with the prisoner with a rope around his neck. This was about 2:45 am. They proceeded eastward, dragging the man in the dust, and from appearances, endeavored to hang him to a telegraph pole, but failing in this found a forked tree in front of the residence of citizen Thomas Cottam, where they drew him up, lingered a while and departed. No clue whatever was obtained by which any of the gang might be identified. The body was buried in our cemetery, but petitions are being circulated to have it removed.”¹⁵

While the funeral cortege was forming, Sheriff Hardy and guard quietly took Forrest to St George and incarcerated him in jail.¹⁶ About 3 o’clock that night, a body of armed men rode the 18 miles from Silver Reef to St George and demanded the jail key from Sheriff Hardy.¹⁷ He refused, but a few bullets shot into the house changed his mind (the bullet hole can be seen in a door in the living room today).¹⁸ The mob dragged Forrest a block east of the court house and attempted to hang him on the arm of a telegraph pole. Failing in that attempt, they dragged him to a large cottonwood tree in front of

¹² *Salt Lake Herald*, 5 October 1880, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

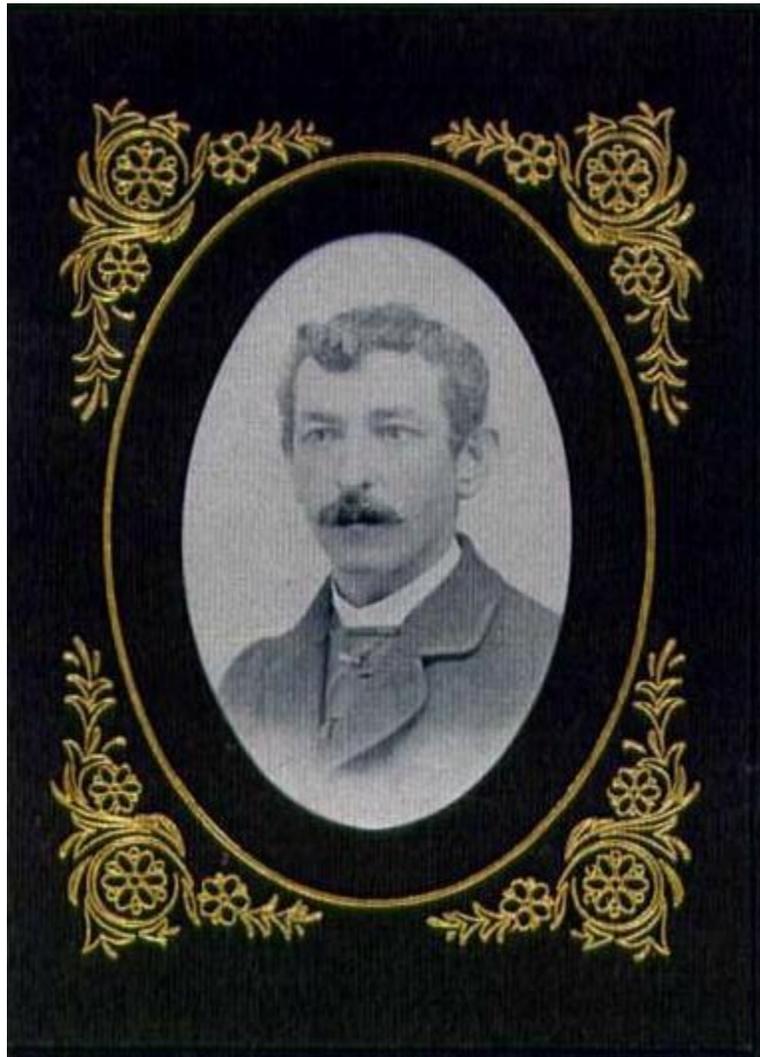
¹⁷ *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Vol 3, 1934, pp. 117-118.

¹⁸ *Henderson Home News*, 28 August 1980, p. 9.

George Cottam's home, where he was hanged on a limb, the loose end of the rope being secured to a nearby honey locust tree.¹⁹

Michael was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Silver Reef. He was a “quiet, peaceable man, and universally esteemed throughout the camp and his family ... was deeply devoted to him. He was “a hard-working family man” and his family was “nearly crazed with sorrow.” Forrest had no known friend and no one “cast a regretful tear over his remains.”²⁰

Mary Ann married Johnson Vivian, the lodger and mine superintendent after Michael’s death. Johnson died in 1891 at Bingham Canyon, Salt Lake, Utah. Mary Ann died of old age in 1914 and was buried next to Johnson in the Mount Olivet Cemetery, Salt Lake City, Utah.²¹



Michael Carbis (Image from *wchsutah.org*)

¹⁹ Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol 3, 1934, pp. 117-118.

²⁰ *Salt Lake Herald*, 5 October 1880, p. 3.

²¹ Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964.



Headstone of Michael Carbis in the Protestant Cemetery in Silver Reef, Utah
(Image from raptorguy14.deviantart.com)