

## Michael G “Shoemake” Shoemaker

Michael G Shoemaker was born about 1835 in New York. By 1860, he was living with his brother William in Fourth Township, Tuolumne, California.<sup>1</sup> In 1870, he was living in Idaho City, Boise, Idaho Territory.<sup>2</sup> This area experienced the Boise Basin gold rush during the Civil War, the largest since the California gold rush. It was winding down in 1870, so we find Michael working as a miner in Lincoln, Nevada, in 1875.<sup>3</sup>

On the 1880 census, Michael was a banker, living in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory.<sup>4</sup> He was known as “Shoemake” and was well-known in the gambling and sporting circles in both Nevada and Utah.<sup>5</sup> He made his headquarters at Cassidy’s Saloon. He would bet on any sport, and was a cheerful loser. He usually had a horse in training and imported pure bred dogs. He had a beautiful red Irish setter that was the pride of the camp. When the dog got sick and died, Shoemake was heavy with grief and drank more whiskey than usual. He put the dog’s body in a coffin and carried it to the grave in Woolley, Lund and Judd’s delivery wagon. Shoemake, about twenty friends, and a dozen saloon bums trailed behind the wagon. He buried “Pike” among the rocks with a huge granite boulder for a headstone<sup>6</sup>

Shoemake entered a sorrel in an 1882 horse race at Silver Reef, against a black horse put up by Mr. Gordon. They bet \$100 a side on the homestretch.<sup>7</sup> He gave the benediction at the Sunday foot races involving buck and squaw Indians. There was also a shooting match and a lynx-dog fight (he lynx lost).<sup>8</sup> He was often seen at the race track, chewing tobacco and nervously stroking his beard.<sup>9</sup> He lived for a time at Frisco, Beaver, Utah Territory. The silver mine there caved in completely in 1885. He moved on to the Tintic mines at Mammoth, Juab, Utah Territory. Hard luck pursued him and he committed suicide by cutting his throat in April 1892 at Mammoth.<sup>10</sup>

Research by Elaine Young, PhD, 2016

Please email [eyoung@youngzones.org](mailto:eyoung@youngzones.org) for additions and corrections

---

<sup>1</sup> United States Census, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> United States Census, 1870.

<sup>3</sup> Nevada State Census, 1875.

<sup>4</sup> United States Census, 1880.

<sup>5</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 22 April 1892, p. 8; Memories of Silver Reef, by Mark A. Pendleton, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup> Memories of Silver Reef, by Mark A. Pendleton, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> *Silver Reef Miner*, 28 October 1882, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, pp. 101, 119.

<sup>9</sup> Memories of Silver Reef, by Mark A. Pendleton, in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1930, p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 22 April 1892, p. 8.