SAN DIEGO CITY FATHER  
WILLIAM AUGUSTUS BEGOLE  

 Story of a Workhorse Pioneer
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STORY OF A WORKHORSE PIONEER

Lael Montgomery

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2017
This story about William Augustus Begole’s nineteenth-century life is dedicated to my husband, Jonathan Vick, a volunteer champion of back country roads, parks, walking trails and other amenities in our town, and to generations of community-makers whose contributions have escaped written history. Thank you all for your enduring gifts to our world. Thank you, Jon, for your steadfast dedication to every community to which you belong and most especially for your encouragement of this and so many other projects of mine and others.
San Diego City Father William Augustus Begole
(1826–1901)
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“... life is sad if you haven’t lived it for a dream ...”
—Chilean Lullaby
While reading Richard Pourade’s multivolume *History of San Diego* several years ago, I was stunned and intrigued to see that a member of a celebrated 1875 San Diego posse shared my mother’s rare Huguenot surname “Begole.” My maternal grandparents, Michigander transplants to Boston, where I grew up, had never mentioned a San Diego pioneer in the family. This tidbit haunted my imagination until I joined Ancestry, GenealogyBank, Fold 3, and a bunch of other genealogical sources and started riffling through family records, census records, local histories, and (at last!) historical newspapers in an effort to learn this fellow’s place in my mother’s family tree and, as it turns out, California history.

Surprisingly, except for Pourade’s brief mention, William Augustus Begole has been ignored by formal histories despite his prominence in business, civic, and fraternal affairs in Northern and Southern California during the second half of the nineteenth century. W. A.’s extensive activities as a miner, investor, businessman, and civic leader in Little York Township (Red Dog, You Bet, Chalk Bluff) in Nevada County, California, and later in the new city of San Diego, are revealed through primary sources: historical newspapers, city government rosters, court records, election records, and organization rosters.

Five years and hundreds of documents later (there are more than 500 citations on GenealogyBank alone), I understand how William Augustus Begole (1826–1901) fits into my family history and how his life story fits into the history of California. From the factual records, we can
piece together activities, events, and turning points in W. A. Begole’s life. Unfortunately, his diary, which he bequeathed to San Diego Lodge No. 35 in 1901, disappeared from the Lodge archives in the 1920s. No other personal communications except his last will and testament have survived. We might imagine a bit about his character from a scattering of W. A.’s experiences, actions, and alliances. But his own thoughts and feelings, and the impressions he made on his contemporaries, we will never know.

The Family Puzzle

William Augustus Begole is my first cousin, four times removed. His father was the brother of my third great-grandfather, the generation born after the American Revolution and who served in the War of 1812. W. A. is also cousin to a cluster of other nineteenth-century Begoles who were intrepid, colorful, and notable settlers of the American West. He is also first cousin (also four times removed) to Robert “Bob” Begole for whom the Begole Archeological Center in Borrego Springs, California, is named. We cousins across four generations all descend from two Begole brothers who settled the Genesee Valley in New York around 1815 after serving in the War of 1812. Our common ancestors are their parents — people who settled in Maryland before the American Revolution and immigrated before 1810 to Upstate New York.

I know this now from family tracking and following hunches, mostly in the Federal Census, beginning in 1790 in Maryland — following not just my research subject but all members of all the Begole families in the area (called “cluster research”), and comparing this information with data gleaned from histories of the settlement of small towns in Upstate New York. My cousin by marriage, genealogist Ellen Gerwitz of Rochester, New York, skillfully led me on this rambling adventure, teaching me much about how to find, assemble, triangulate, and interpret information in census records. William Augustus Begole did not appear by name in any of these New York records. I was not entirely sure that we had assigned him to the right set of parents until I compared sibling information from census records with death and cemetery records, and probate records in New York and in San Diego. Bingo! William Augustus Begole’s 1895 will named his brothers and sisters and their children.

The California Puzzle:

W. A. Begole’s Trail ~ Gold Country and San Diego

Cracking the California puzzle was tedious but much more straightforward. I could assemble a timeline from historical newspapers and other documents. GenealogyBank has more than 500 newspaper articles citing W. A. Begole and several hundred more citing other Begoles who were also roaming around the American West between 1840 and 1900. The Nevada County Historical Society and the San Diego History Center have a scattering of newspaper citations on microfiche and in court records from the 1850s that cite W. A. Begole. Historical property records in Nevada and San Diego Counties track his land purchases and sales from the 1850s. Additional government documents, such as precinct and election records, and bits of information from the archives of private, civic, and fraternal organizations helped complete the picture. By working back and forth across all these, I was able to piece together W. A.’s story and identify how W. A. and the others fit into the family story and into the larger nineteenth century histories of Nevada County and San Diego.

This is what I learned.
Prominent in Primary Historical Sources for Fifty Years and in San Diego’s Foundational Institutions

William Augustus Begole figures prominently in business, civic, and fraternal affairs for the fifty years after his arrival in California (in Nevada County in 1849/50 and in San Diego in 1869) until his death in September, 1901. Newspapers, election records, organization rosters, and legal and civic records reveal that W. A. Begole was a leader among the pioneer miners in Little York Township, a Justice of the Peace, owner-builder of the ditches from the Yuba River that enabled hydraulic mining, a delegate to American and Republican conventions, and a founding director of the fire department and the Mount Carmel Masonic Lodge.

In San Diego, W. A. served as one of five elected city trustees for five years, was trustee president for a year and a half, and a city alderman for two. He was also: an early investor in the San Diego-Yuma Turnpike; a San Diego Reading Room Association Trustee and member of the Board of Managers; Vice President of the Citizens Railroad Committee, Vice President of the Grant-Wilson Club; Chairman of the Republican County Committee and many times a convention delegate; and a Republican Club officer and member of the Finance Committee as well as a dedicated party leader and booster of Republican candidates, initiatives, and projects.

He was further a San Diego Library Trustee, a first and second Vice President of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, a recording secretary of the San Diego Society of Natural History, and a Pacific Railroad investor. He was appointed many times an election judge and inspector for Ward 3 and to the County Grand Juror pool. He was elected in 1888 as one of the fifteen freemen who drafted the new San Diego City Charter, and in 1889, he was one of nine aldermen elected with Mayor Douglas Gunn to implement the new charter. As an alderman, he was appointed to draft the new tax levy, served on committees on Water and Fire, Public Buildings and Lighting, and Police and
WILLIAM AUGUSTUS BEGOLE was born in the wilderness of Mount Morris, Genesee County, New York, in October, 1826 to Benjamin and Margaret Schull Begole. He was next to the youngest of six children born across sixteen years. He had two sisters, Elizabeth and Nancy, ten and eight years older, and three brothers, Joseph six years and Joshua two years older. Benjamin was five years younger. We see in this brood many of the family’s favorite names: William, Augustus, Benjamin, Joshua, Elizabeth, and Nancy.

The oft-repeated family story is that the Begoles were descendants of French Huguenots who immigrated to Virginia before 1700 to avoid France’s persecution of Protestants. Public records show William Augustus’ grandfather, William Rivers Begole, was living in Frederick County, Maryland by the time of the American Revolution where he owned some land, engaged in farming, and served as a corporal in the patriot militia. According to the Federal Censuses of 1790 and 1800, there were no slaves in the William Begole (Begold) household.

Around 1805, William Rivers Begole moved his wife and six of their grown children, including William Augustus’ father, Benjamin Franklin Begole, from Hagerstown to the fertile Genesee Valley. They were following their eldest son, Thomas Jefferson Begole (1776–1854), to his post as land agent at the Hermitage in Groveland, New York, for the Maryland Company owned by the abundantly landed and rich Fitzhugh and Carroll families. These Maryland neighbors had purchased thousands of acres in Western New York with another well-heeled and
also slaveholding Marylander, Nathaniel Rochester. Though one of these adult Begole siblings kept moving west to Illinois, five of them married and raised their families in the Genesee Valley. 19

W. A. Begole’s father, Benjamin Franklin Begole (1786–1869), was born in Hagerstown three years after the American Revolution ended. His younger brother, another William Augustus Begole (1788–1862, and for whom the subject of this biography was named), was born two years later. Theirs was the generation that served in the War of 1812. Benjamin Begole and his brother William both served in Colonel Phile- tus Swift’s Regiment of New York. 20 After the war, these two brothers both married and located in the village of Mount Morris, New York. Their parents and three other siblings settled and re-settled in nearby frontier outposts of Groveland, Dansville, Wayland, Avon, and Geneseo. Benjamin Franklin Begole married Margaret Shull, most likely a daughter of one of two Schull brothers who emigrated from Maryland to Dansville, New York. Benjamin’s brother and W. A.’s uncle William Augustus married Eleanor Bowles, daughter of another relocated Maryland neighbor, Thomas Augustus Bowles. (Both these families were apparently crazy for the name Augustus.) Thomas Augustus Bowles had moved his family also from Hagerstown, Maryland to Wayland, New York in the early 1800s. 23

This bare-bones genealogical history suggests that William Augustus Begole grew up in an extended and tightly knit family of at least sixteen children of the two Begole brothers in the sparsely populated wilds of Mount Morris, in Upstate New York, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The two families all played, worked, and attended the one-room school together and depended upon one another.

Benjamin Franklin Begole (1786–1869) and Margaret Schull Begole (1794–1840) 22

Six children

Elizabeth (Betsey) (1816–1836) killed in a buggy accident in Mount Morris
Nancy (1818–1892) married Nathan Bills, remained in Mount Morris, NY
Joseph (1820–1876) stayed in Mount Morris, NY
Joshua (1824–1907) emigrated to Burlingame, KS
William Augustus (1826–1901) emigrated to Red Dog and San Diego, CA
Benjamin Bradley (1831–1876) emigrated to Chicago, IL

William Augustus Begole (1788–1862) and Eleanor Bowles Begole (1794–1871)

Ten children

Josiah William (1815–1896) emigrated to Flint, MI, and became Governor of Michigan
Frederick Augustus (1817–1896) emigrated to Flint, MI
Thomas Benjamin Begole (1819–1915) emigrated to Flint, MI
Sarah Eleanor (1821–1915) married Hezekiah Brinkerhoff and emigrated to Ypsilanti, MI
Cornelia Jane (1823–1902) married Hiram Mills, emigrated to Detroit, MI
Myron H. (1825–1863) emigrated to Cedar, IA; killed in the Civil War
Philo M. Begole (1828–1896) emigrated to Cedar, IA, and then to Flint/Vienna, MI 23
George William (1830–1831) stayed in Mount Morris, NY
Julia Begole (1832–1892) married Malcolm McLachlen, emigrated to Kansas City, MO
William Franklin (1836–1912) emigrated to Belleville, MI
Mount Morris during William’s childhood was still a true frontier settlement. Purchased from the Seneca Indians by a white trader in the late 1790s and later by Robert Morris, financier of the American Revolution for whom the town is named, parcels from The Morris Reserve were sold to settlers. The Town of Mount Morris was separated from the town of Leicester in 1813. W. A.’s father Benjamin Begole and his Uncle William Begole, after serving in the War of 1812, purchased a track of wild timberland ... about two miles from the site of the present village of Mount Morris, and in the midst of the forest erected a log cabin, the customary dwelling of the early settlers. There were neither railways or canals traversing the country at that time; and Rochester, the nearest marketing and milling point, thirty-six miles distant, was accessible by teams only, three days being consumed in making the round trip. For many years after [their] settlement deer, bears, wolves, and other wild animals roamed the forests and were often a terror to the inhabitants. By 1813 Mount Morris had four frame and 22 log houses. Small stores, artisans’ shops and grist and lumber mills were established in the early 1800s as Mount Morris developed into a self-supporting community. Early industries included wool carding, a grist mill, a distillery that used the wheat grown on the flats, and the making of cloth from hemp also grown on the flats ... 

While the Town of Mount Morris was established in 1818, the village was not incorporated until 1835 when W. A. was nine years old. Reminiscing in 1882 about those early days in a speech, W. A.’s cousin Governor Josiah Begole said, our dwellings were built of round logs just as they were found in the primeval forest. Occasionally a pioneer would build his residence by hewing the logs both outside and in, providing he was so fortunate as to have a little spare money that he had earned before coming here. This was called “aristocratic” or “putting on the style.” The fireplace was always ample, often extending more than half way across the house .... Some of us remember with pleasure the big backlog drawn to the door with oxen, and requiring the combined strength of the family to place in position; then a smaller log was placed on top, making a fire that imparted both light and warmth to the family group gathered about the hearth.

1840: Death of W. A.’s Mother and His Father’s Remarriage

W. A.’s mother died in July 1840, the year Charles Henry Dana published his romantic California tale, Two Years Before the Mast. W. A. was fourteen years old. His oldest sister, Elizabeth (Betsey), had been killed in a wagon accident four years earlier. In May 1840, just two months before his mother’s death, his sister Nancy had married Nathan Bills, a local fellow. Still living at home with their father were the four boys: Joseph (20), Joshua (16), W. A. (14), and Ben (9). The next March, only eight months after their mother’s death, their father, Benjamin, remarried thirty-year-old Maria Ewart of Groveland. Maria was only a few years older than W. A.’s sister Nancy, and the new marriage was also something of a convoluted family affair. W. A.’s new stepmother was also his cousin by marriage. (Maria’s brother, Harvey Ewart, was married to W. A.’s first cousin Mathilde Begole, daughter of Benjamin’s older brother, Thomas Begole, the Groveland land agent.) Marriages of cousins were still quite frequent and ordinary in the nineteenth century

Ten years later, according to the 1850 Federal Census, none of Benjamin Begole’s first family of children were living with their father and new stepmother. W. A.’s older brothers Joseph and Joshua were unmarried farmers, boarding in the Mount Morris household of a family that lived next door to their uncle William Augustus Begole. The younger boys, W. A. and his brother Benjamin, were not living in
There are no government records that establish W. A. Begole's whereabouts between the 1840 Federal Census and the California State Census of 1852. Records and newspapers were scarce at this time in the American West. As discussed in the previous chapter, the year of W. A. Begole's arrival in California was either 1846 or 1849. Confusion is a result of the assertion in his 1901 obituary that he had travelled west with the Donner party “in 1849” when the Donner tragedy took place in 1846. Regardless of when he arrived in California, from numerous references we can infer that he was quite likely prospecting for gold around Sacramento by 1849.

The first recorded trace of W. A. Begole in California is found in the spring of 1851 in the April 1 edition of the *Sacramento Transcript* where his name appears in the *List of Letters Waiting at the Sacramento City Post Office*. Also in 1851, the Nevada County Chattel Mortgage records for May 3 show that William Augustus Begole loaned $132.16 to two miners secured by their one-tenth share in the Green Mountain Company in the long-gone Sierra “town” of Hunt’s Hill.

The first Begole listed in official California census records appears in the State Census of 1852. Here we find a twenty-five-year-old male Begole from New York living in Calaveras County. His occupation is “miner.” Based on his unique surname, age, and birthplace this could be William Augustus. Miners were “transient and moved often to follow each new rumor of a rich strike.” Gold rush towns were sprouting all over central California by this time. Exactly where and when
1867–68: Red Dog Succumbs to Deluge and Exhausted Mining

The final “swallowing” of Red Dog by its neighboring mining settlement of You Bet, a mile away, was a result of several factors:

+ More than one hundred days of continuous heavy rains during the winter of 1867–68 washed away hydraulic ditches and flumes, destroyed the water supply that was essential for the town’s mining operations, and buried mining equipment and rich “pay dirt” under tons of mud and debris.79,80
+ Hydraulic mining in Red Dog was no longer profitable for small operators. Engineering expertise and equipment required to create outlets for the vast hills and rivers of tailings that had been produced by hydraulic mining and to purchase and operate the “improved appliances” required to extract more gold from the tailings were beyond the reach of all but the largest companies of “capitalist” investors. Hydraulic mining in the Red Dog area would continue until the Sawyer Decision in 1884 ended the practice because of its profound environmental destruction and danger to downstream settlements and farms.81
+ The town of You Bet was nearly completely destroyed by fire on April 24, 186982 and in need of buildings.

On November 13, 1869, a “Brief Item” in the Sacramento Daily Union announced, “Red Dog is no more; You Bet has swallowed it.”83 The post office at Red Dog closed four days later, exactly fourteen years after it had opened on February 17, 1855. The last few remaining members of the Mount Carmel Masonic Lodge surrendered their charter on August 16, 1872. Lodge records were lost in the 1906 Great Fire in San Francisco. Some sources report as many as 2,000 people—men, women, and children—during Red Dog’s heyday. But those numbers had already dwindled to only a few hundred souls after the fires and rains of the late 1860s.

Wells recalls in his History of Nevada County, published in 1880, that “nearly all the houses, including the Odd Fellows Hall, were moved to You Bet, which then became the live town of the district. There are now but the unoccupied brick store and one other building standing on the old site of the town of Red Dog.”84 Juanita Brown writes that the Odd Fellows Hall was the last building to be moved, and that occurred in 1870.85 Today (2016), nothing of Red Dog remains but the old Red Dog Cemetery, maintained by the Nevada County Cemetery District.

Histories, newspaper articles, and public records show that the town of Red Dog was destroyed during the winter of 1868 and abandoned completely by 1870. Even so, there is a trace of evidence that W. A. Begole kept one foot in Nevada County at the same time he moved south to San Diego. W. A. was elected high priest of the Nevada Royal Arch Masons No. 6 in Nevada City, California, in December of 1868, and he registered to vote as a resident of Red Dog on August 3, 1869, the same day his deed for the double lot at 529 Fifth Street was recorded in San Diego County. Six weeks later, he steamed into San Diego.
In her book, *The Story of San Diego and Its Founder Alonzo Horton*, Elizabeth MacPhail writes a detailed history of San Diego in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, entitling the period between 1874 and 1879, “Living on Climate and Great Expectations”:

The next decade (after the 1873 financial panic) in San Diego was a period of marking time. Those who were retired or had come for their health were content to live on climate and savings .... Others who remained stayed because they liked it here and, like Horton, were confident that because of its climate and bay San Diego would one day be a great city. They were willing to wait, time and again being buoyed up by promises of great things to come, meaning a railroad .... There were no society ‘greats.’ Each individual was accepted for himself, without regard to his background or financial condition.99

Between booms—despite empty buildings, lack of commerce, drought, and increasing ethnic animosities toward the Chinese and Native Americans—the population grew slowly. In the county, agriculture grew, particularly fruit and honey production, and gold mining tanked. Pourade calls these years the “Discontented Seventies” and writes, “Life was rather serene, though it was not always easy to live with thoughts of what might have been, and picnics were a favorite pastime. They were held under the great oaks or pepper trees, which were growing
there was already a courthouse and a post office. a water company formed in san diego drilled wells and pumped water to a reservoir at fifth and hawthorne. the city secured federal funds to channel the san diego river back into false (now mission) bay when the rains came. board sidewalks and the first fire hydrant appeared on fifth street. in the winter of 1874, the san diego fire department threw an annual ball at horton’s hall, and w. a. begole was on the honorary and reception committees with twenty-five other local luminaries. the san diego society of natural history was founded by daniel cleveland and dr. george barnes, and w. a. begole served as recording secretary. the new commercial bank opened on the corner of fifth and g streets, and w. a. begole built its tin roof. the san diego free reading room association opened san diego’s first library, and w. a. begole was a trustee and served on the board of managers. a gas company came to town. george marston opened his own store on the corner of fifth and d and married anna lee gunn, douglas gunn’s sister; george marston and douglas gunn’ father, lewis gunn, were the witnesses at w. a. begole’s 1881 marriage to helen e. hanford. the first city directory was published by the chamber of commerce in 1874. w. a. begole was listed and advertised in the directory, and for the next three years he was a vice president of the chamber.

san diegans during the discontented seventies continued bit by bit to create the city’s mechanical, commercial, civic, cultural, and political infrastructure. the city trustees had already set aside 1,440 acres for what is now balboa park and had established mount hope cemetery.

w. a. begole built a small and sturdy tin trunk in 1876 for safekeeping of lodge no. 35 financial records. still stuffed with folders, one for each year from 1876 to 1900, the trunk remains in the proud custody of lodge no. 35.

w. a. begole’s 1876 invoice for the tin records trunk. he charged the lodge $3.50.
During this decade, W. A. Begole also served two terms (1873–1877) as one of five San Diego City Trustees. While he was president of the trustees (February 1875–May 1876), he received the once-again disappointing cable from Washington, D.C., that announced postponement of a vote to subsidize the Texas Pacific railroad’s link to San Diego. During his tenure, the Southern Pacific Railroad finally connected San Francisco and Los Angeles, allowing San Diegans to hang onto their vision of connecting their magnificent harbor with the rest of the continent. (For a detailed account of the thirty-year railroad saga that provoked and perpetuated San Diego’s land booms and busts, see the pamphlet, “The Railroad Story of San Diego County.”)

In August 1873, the same year W. A. began his term as a San Diego city trustee, his second cousin, Charles Dorrance (also spelled Dorrence) Begole of Lone Pine, another member of this intrepid generation that settled the American West, with two companions (A. H. Johnson and J. Lucas) became “the first to climb Mount Whitney.”

It was also during his City Trustees presidency that W. A. Begole designed and raised the funds to build a “party cannon” (in the photograph at the front of this book) for San Diego’s enthusiastic celebration of the nation’s 100th birthday on July 4, 1876. This parade and festival accoutrement was parked on its caisson in Horton Plaza for many years and was known both as “The Little Slogan” and “the Centennial Gun.” The cannon, which disappeared in the 1920s, was recovered in 2014 and restored in 2016 by San Diego’s Save Our Heritage Organisation and members of the Begole family.

529 Fifth Street: W. A.’s “Home Office”

Another of W. A. Begole’s achievements during the late 1870s was upgrading the building at 529 Fifth Street on the east side between Island and Market, where he lived and worked.

In 1878, the San Diego Union reported the completion of W. A.’s new brick building on the south portion of his double lot at 529 Fifth Street, “a handsome store with a fine iron front, large shop windows and galvanized iron cornices.” The San Diego Gaslamp Association features the Higgins–Begole Building on their “Gaslamp Quarter Architectural and History Tour” which GeoTourist has posted online. The tour itinerary explains the building’s evolution:

Two separate buildings were joined in a single façade before 1921. The north half building’s first story was constructed circa 1868, the oldest documented brick building in the Gaslamp Quarter. W. A. Begole, who ran the hardware store, added a second story in 1878 and a third in 1886. The south two-story art deco building was constructed by Mr. Higgins in 1873 and a third story added between 1906 and 1921 when the facades were joined. It served as a grocery, dry goods and billiard parlor. The upper floors were rented rooms, most likely a bordello before the 1912 Stingaree raid. It also served as rooms for the Salvation Army, the Hotel Togo and the Hawaiian Hotel.

The Republican Advantage

To be a Republican was an advantage in 1870s San Diego. Horton’s ambition to shape his city’s political preferences was well known, and Republican committees and clubs were prolific and active. W. A. Begole had been actively engaged in Republican politics from his years in Little York and Red Dog. He continued these activities and alliances in San Diego through the late 1890s, nearly to the end of his life. He was elected chairman of the Republican County Committee in 1875 and was the Third Ward delegate to the Republican Convention in 1878. (Ephraim Morse, A. E. Horton, John Young, and J. B. Levet were the Fourth Ward delegates that year.)

In the City Election of May 1878, W. A. Begole failed to be re-elected to a third term as a city trustee. He was defeated by another Republican, Arthur H. Julian (77 votes to 60). Julian was both a Fifth Street neighbor as well as a fellow tinsmith and hardware dealer. A letter to the editor on May 9 in the San Diego Union signed “Fair Play,”
argued for his re-election and described W. A.'s many virtues. This letter provides a glimpse into W. A. Begole’s character through the ways his contemporary supporters saw him, and a glimpse of the contentiousness over railroad-related board action that colored the 1878 city election:

W. A. Begole has surely performed his work faithfully and well, and won even from his opponents the title of “Old Honesty.” He is an intelligent, fair-minded business man, and a strict economist. His success in his own private business is his sure recommendation and good evidence of his ability to manage the affairs of the public. From the outset he has never wavered in his devotion to the railroad interests of San Diego—never favored anything but the original Texas Pacific Railroad bill straight through to this bay—no compromise—has always been hopeful of our ultimate success, and never has spoken a disparaging word to dampen the hope of others. But this with the “new dealers” constitutes crime enough for any man’s removal. They are determined if possible by every means foul and fair to clean out those faithful public servants, undo what they have done regards Railroad matters, defeat the will of the people and defraud our agents in Washington out of their just dues. The voters of the Third Ward have it in their power to say to these new dealers in politics, “You have gone far enough,” and by re-electing Mr. Begole again, you assure for Trustee a man of sterling merit and have the Railroad business carried out in a sensible business-like manner. Do not fail to vote for Mr. Begole.¹⁰⁸

“Fair Play”’s letter fails to explain why exactly W. A. lost the election to A. H. Julian. On the surface, it would seem that the two men would be more aligned than opposed and that Arthur Julian was not one of the “new dealers” that “Fair Play” describes. Arthur Julian was a Republican, an active affiliate in Masonic Lodge No. 35, a railroad promoter, and a vice president with W. A. Begole of the Republican-dominated San Diego Chamber of Commerce. Adding credence to this impression, the San Diego Union in an editorial the next day praised election results and congratulated voters for staying the course. And two weeks later, Third Ward Republicans recommended both Begole and Julian as good potential delegates to the upcoming Republican County Convention, along with Simon Levi, Ephraim Morse, and three other good “new boys.” In the delegates election, Begole was chosen, Julian was not.¹⁰⁹

However, despite all these commonalities, Arthur H. Julian may have been among the critics of the city trustees’ decision to issue a new round of railroad bonds to “carry out the agreement made in 1872 with Col. Thomas Scott.” After all, Scott’s railroad never materialized. Minutes from the city trustees’ meetings from October 1877 suggest tension and disagreement around the trustees’ actions. The minutes record that W. L. Williams refused to accept his election as city treasurer. The minutes also include the text of a brazen “warning,” published in the San Diego News and other California newspapers, that declared the new city bonds illegal and void. The warning was signed by sixteen prominent San Diegans, including Jacob M. Julian,¹¹ a Democrat and publisher of the San Diego News, and Andrew Cassidy, former trustee and county supervisor. Several signers were Fifth Street businessmen, presumably from Ward 3. The minutes also include the text of a fight-back resolution, which was passed, accusing the signers of “collusion and preconcert with enemies of the Texas and Pacific Railway Company and of the City of San Diego,” and initiating a lawsuit to recover damages. Begole and the Republican County Committee leadership had also been the subject of politically based criticism in the past by Democrat Jacob Julian when he was editor of the World.¹¹¹ Battles over railroad policies and city politics are too complex for this story to cover adequately; they are well described in texts by San Diego historians listed in the bibliography. Too, this story’s focus on W. A. Begole regretfully prevents a deeper dive into the kin relationships, if any, between Republican merchant Arthur Julian, Democrat newspaperman Jacob Julian, Mike Julian (for whom the town of Julian was named), and the other families with the “Julian” surname who were living in San Diego at this time.
was also W. A.’s business associate, friend and, twenty years later, his pallbearer.

We’ll never know the true story behind the salacious facts. But the Begole divorce in 1882 certainly appears to have been a non-event among these friends and city movers, as the next chapter details. Both Helen and W. A. Begole remained in San Diego, where Helen E. Hanford died several years later in her son’s home.

**Chapter Six**

*Early 1880s: Run-Up to San Diego’s Late ’80s Boom-a-Rama*

In the years leading up to the railroad’s arrival, W. A. Begole travelled frequently between San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Diego, sometimes alone and sometimes with business associates Douglas Gunn and Philip Morse. When he was not a passenger steaming on the Orizaba, the Ancon, or the Queen of the Pacific between San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, he was shipping or receiving materials and products. He was also doing work for the city; his bills to the city trustees were recorded regularly in the minutes and in newspaper accounts of these meetings.

In March 1882, the Masons opened their new Masonic Building at Sixth and H Streets. W. A. built the time capsule that contained three daily papers and other mementoes that was placed in the cornerstone of the new building. He was also elected to the board of directors and began serving as secretary of the new Masonic Association, a position he held for many more years.¹²⁴

The month of September 1882, when Helen filed for divorce, was crammed both with fraternal and political projects. For the founding
of the Royal Arch Masons No. 61, W. A. was elected high priest and treasurer of the new chapter and was also in charge of outfitting and dressing up the lodge rooms.\textsuperscript{125} There were also a slew of Republican initiatives leading up to and including the Republican county convention, for which W. A. played a number of different roles. San Diegan Republicans formed a “Young Men’s Republicans Club” to the loud guffaws of most of the members who “had crossed the shady side of life and were basking in the sunshine of antiquity.”\textsuperscript{126} From the small crowd of usual suspects, most of who were also Masonic Lodge No. 35 affiliates, W. A. was appointed to the finance committee. At the Republican county convention, W. A. was the chairman on resolutions and was appointed both to the county Republican Central Committee and to the senator nominating committee that would, with its San Bernardino counterpart, nominate their joint Republican candidate for the California Senate.\textsuperscript{127}

At the beginning of October, W. A.’s friend and fellow Mason, Captain Nelson Olds, died. Brothers W. A. Begole, William Wallace Bowers, W. W. Stewart, A. H. Julian, E. W. Bushyhead, and A. Stephens were pallbearers.\textsuperscript{128} Days later, W. A. was appointed an election inspector for Ward 3 by the San Diego Board of Supervisors.\textsuperscript{129} Nine days later, another San Diego notable, Judge McNealy, heard and granted the Begole divorce.\textsuperscript{130}

**Cousin Josiah William Begole Elected Michigan Governor**

A week after the divorce was granted, on November 7, 1882, W. A.’s first cousin, Josiah William Begole of Flint, Michigan, was elected Michigan Governor as the Fusion Party candidate. Josiah had been involved in city and state politics for some time: Flint City Council member, state senator (1870–1871), delegate to the Republican National Convention (1872), and member of the US Congress (1873–1875). A Flint pioneer, lumberman, and banker, Josiah Begole was also a founder of Flint Water and Gas Works, a vice president of Citizens and Commercial Savings Bank in Flint, and owner of Flint Wagon Works, manufacturer of wagons. As the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth, Flint Wagon Works, following the invention of the combustion engine and under the tutelage of Josiah’s son, Charles Myron Begole, evolved into the Chevrolet and Buick Motor companies.\textsuperscript{131} W. A. and his older cousin, Josiah, grew up together in the wilderness of Mount Morris, New York, sons of brothers. Josiah visited W. A. in San Diego several times before and after his tenure as governor.\textsuperscript{132}
During the next few years between business trips, W. A. Begole built the tin roofs on W. W. Bowers’ new showplace, the Florence Hotel, and the new First National and Commercial Bank buildings. He was also appointed regularly to the grand jury pool by the county board of supervisors and joined the efforts of San Diego Republicans to elect Blaine and Logan.

1885: Through Train from San Diego to the Continent

In November 1885, the last spike was driven and the first through train departed San Diego, ending thirty years of railroad frustrations and launching the grand land boom of the late 1880s. The railroad and the public relations and hype that came with it pulled throngs of tourists, speculators and immigrants to San Diego County. Frederick G. Hoyt, in his analysis of the 1880s boom, quotes historian Glenn S. Dumke, who wrote, “A basic cause of the boom of the 1880s was the extensive advertising and publicity campaign which carried information about southern California to all parts of the world.”

Oddly, the three featured firms that received such high praise from “C. A.” are not listed in the official 1886–1887 San Diego City Directory. Perhaps the sponsors of this effort in the Chicago press were not the Chamber old guard, after all? Wilmer Shields points out that the number of realtors listed in the San Diego City Directory exploded from 46 in 1886–1887 to 136 in 1887–1888.

Pourade also attributes the boom that followed the completion of the rail link to hyperbolic promotion of Southern California by the railroads themselves, land speculators, and other boosters seeking to enrich themselves. “By mid-1886 several thousand persons were arriving in San Diego monthly by train and ship. Seeking speculative markets, outside capital reached into the County. Land speculators boarded incoming trains at Oceanside, offering land in that area ‘at bargain prices,’ or at anyplace else.” He writes enticingly about San Diego’s boom times in The Glory Years:

The two years that began in 1886 and ended in 1888 were the most gaudy, wicked and exciting in San Diego’s history. The boomers and gamblers had followed the speculators to San Diego and now came the entertainers and the criminals. It was San Francisco of the Gold Rush all over again.
I want to thank San Diego historian Ellen Sweet (and friend of archeologist Bob Begole through her husband, Melvin) for inspiring this project, as well as the historians and genealogists who helped me locate, dig into, and make sense of the records: Jane Kenealy and Carol Myers, San Diego History Center; David Allen Lambert, Chief Genealogist, New England Historical Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts; Peter Steelquist, San Diego Genealogical Society; John Goodloe, San Diego Masonic Lodge No. 35 F. & A.M.; Diane Brown, Nevada County Historical Society, Nevada City, California; San Diego historian Richard Crawford, California Room, San Diego Library; Nevada County historian David A. Comstock, Comstock-Bonanza Press, Santa Rosa, California, whose books and digitized biographical and newspaper digests of Nevada County are unique treasures; Jerry Brady, San Pedro, California, whose annual tour of Red Dog is publicized on the internet and led me to other sites and new revelations; my cousin by marriage, genealogist and family historian supreme, Ellen Gerwitz, Rochester, New York; historians Bob Fout, Frederick, Maryland, Jean Conte, Hagerstown, Maryland, and Dale Ladd, Flint, Michigan, whose research into the Begole and Bowles families in Maryland and Michigan has been invaluable; and Bruce and Alana Coons, Save our Heritage Organisation, San Diego, whose acquisition in 2013 and restoration in 2016 of “Little Slogan,” W. A.’s “party cannon,” makes the telling of this story right now especially timely.

I will be forever grateful, too, to my siblings, Lee and Bob Montgomery, my husband Jon, and my besties Ann Quinley, Maureen Convery, Melany Runyan, Rich Rudolf, and Suzanne Ward for their generosity and endurance in listening equally patiently to the details—picayune and monumental—of my OMG discoveries for the last five years. Their engagement with me on this journey has provided encouragement and such good company!
2016 Restoration of Little Slogan


Preface

3) Pourade, Richard F. The History of San Diego: The Glory Years, 137.

4) W. A.’s first cousin Josiah Begole (1815–1896) was a Flint, Michigan pioneer and Michigan Governor (1882–1884); Josiah’s son, Charles Myron Begole, turned the family wagon business into the Buick and Chevrolet car companies. W. A.’s second cousin, Augustus William Begole (1837–1893), was a miner and pioneer founder of Ouray, Colorado; his nephew George Davis Begole became the Mayor of Denver. Another second cousin, Charles Dorrance Begole (1836–1890), was a miner and pioneer founder of Lone Pine, CA, and one of the three Anglo settlers of Lone Pine who first climbed Mount Whitney together in 1873.

W. A. Begole Obituary

5) “Crossed the Plains with Donner Party.” San Francisco Call, September 3, 1901

Chapter One


7) San Diego County Grantee Records, Book 6, p. 205. Lot D of Block 96 in Horton’s Addition.

9) San Diego County Grantee Records, Book 8, p. 277. Lot B of Block 123, Horton’s Addition.
10) Koschmann, A. H. and M. H Bergendahl. “Principal Gold-Producing Districts of the United States.”
13) “Crossed the Plains with Donner Party.” *San Francisco Call*, September 3, 1901
14) Stewart, George R. *The California Trail*, 301.

**Chapter Two**

17) “Journal of the Committee of Observation of Frederick County, September 12, 1775—October 24, 1776,” 52.
18) First Census of the United States, 1790.
20) Ibid.
22) Benjamin Begole married second Maria Ewart (1810–1883). There were no children of this marriage.
23) Philo Begole is the author’s great-great grandfather. Philo’s son, Frederick Hurlburt Begole, visited San Diego City Father William Augustus Begole in San Diego when he was the Mayor of Marquette, Michigan.
27) Todd, Nancy L. *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Village of Mount Morris, Nomination Document*.
30) War of 1812 Pension Application Files Index, 1812–1815.

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36) Comstock, David A. *Lives of Nevada County Pioneers*.
37) Ibid.
38) Brady, J. *You Bet Gold Fever*.
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Lael Montgomery is a North San Diego County activist and family history researcher who discovered several years ago, while reading Richard Pourade’s multi-volume *History of San Diego*, that San Diego “City Father” William Augustus Begole (1826–1901) is her first cousin, four times removed. While researching W. A. Begole’s life and his place in her mother’s family tree, she discovered that a cluster of W. A.’s nineteenth-century Begole kin, like him, also were intrepid, colorful, and notable settlers of the American West.

She holds an MEd from Harvard University Graduate School of Education and an MA and PhD from The Fielding Institute, all in cognitive and developmental psychology. She is mainly interested these days in discovering for herself and others how our family and personal stories fit into the story of America and how the journeys of ancestors we have never known leave traces in our own lives.

Lael lives in Valley Center, California, with her husband and a small menagerie of rescue cats and dogs, guinea hens, and heritage turkeys, all pets.