

Andrew Elsbree came to Tuolumne County, California in 1855. Like most who came to the Mother Lode in the 1850s, Elsbree tried his hand at mining. He worked various claims with some success. He finally found what was known as Greaser Gulch, on the north end of Sonora, which yielded substantial amounts of gold over the years. He built a nice home on the property and lived there until his death in 1914.

In April 1878, Andrew was appointed night watchman for the City of Sonora. He went on watch at nine o'clock each night until daylight the next morning. He was not paid by the City of Sonora, but by business owners who wanted the added protection. He was later appointed a deputy constable, with the authority to make arrests.

In his early years on the job, Elsbree was accompanied by his faithful dog, Rover, who was said to have saved his life on several occasions. Most of the accounts described in the local papers involve men who had drunk too much.

One of the more amusing events was in 1879, when at one o'clock in the morning, Elsbree and Rover responded to cries of help at a local residence, when an inebriated man tried to break in. The home was previously occupied by "females of damaged reputation." The drunk didn't realize the ladies no longer lived there. No harm was done, but there much excitement in the neighborhood.

Elsbree was injured one night in 1881, when Ferdinand Tanzi tried to enter a local saloon and wasn't allowed in. He became terribly irate, Elsbree tried to calm him, but to no avail. Tanzi struck Elsbree with a heavy object, causing a serious gash on his forehead. The night watchman then drew his revolver and fired two shots at Tanzi, one going through the upper muscles of Tanzi's right arm.

Elsbree also called on people in the early hours of the morning if they had a stage to catch. As Teresa Mallard recalled, "At four o'clock, not only our family, but also others within hearing, were aroused by his furious ringing of our doorbell and the barking of dogs."

In 1898, two Chinese men, Ah Wy and Ah Fook got into a fight. Fook owed Wy's brother \$2.40, which Wy tried to collect. Fook refused and the battle began. The fight escalated when Fook grabbed a heavy glass, cutting Wy in the head. Both men kept fighting like bulldogs, when Elsbree appeared and soon had both men safely in jail. The following morning, they were each fined \$5.

On November 3, 1900, the *Union Democrat* announced that Andrew Elsbree was retiring. They noted that during his long tenure, "his vigilance averted serious trouble in fights and heavy losses by fire. He was ever faithful to his duties, and many who felt that their persons and properties were safe and secure under his watchful attention, regret that advancing years has compelled him to retire from a position which he so acceptably filled."