

# A Great Success Story: The Ledford Brothers

Contributed by Joyce Gaston Reece May 5, 2012.

All Italics are excerpts from a narrative written by Rebecca Dulcina Ledford, circa 1946. Edited, resourced by and used with permission of granddaughter, Dorris Ledford Prevou

*Just over the North Carolina-Tennessee line, thirty five miles from the Copper Basin of Ducktown and Copperhill, my father first saw the light of day, 1846. The son of a farmer and small landowner. His home was a log cabin big house and lean-to daubed with mud to fill the cracks, stick and clay chimney. A two room cabin in a small land plot of about 5 or 6 acres.*

William Lafayette Ledford and James Edward Ledford's story is the epitome of the "Great American Success Story." One of rags to riches, W. L. Ledford was born April 23, 1846 in North Carolina. W. L.'s brother was James E. Ledford, born January 1, 1848. His mother was Catherine, the daughter of Jacob B. Stewart and Mary Ann Edwards.

*At the age of about 7 his father died, leaving a widow and one younger brother. . . . W. L. or Fayette and Jim Ledford who, with their mother went to the nearby mining town for better opportunities to make their home there at Ducktown, Tennessee. These boys grew up around the mines to manhood, became miners in the Ducktown mines for the support of themselves and their mother. . . .*

Little is known about the youth of W. L. and Jim. We know their father likely died circa 1851. It is said they went to work in the copper mines at a very early age but it is obvious that they did have some education. Their lives seem to have been determined by the fluctuations of the copper mining industry in the Copper Basin.

The two brothers were mentioned three times in *Ducktown: Back in Raht's Time* by R. E. Barclay in an anonymous poem about its mining days from 1865-1878. Not only does this poem mention names familiar to the Ledford family, but it mentions W. L. (Mug) and Jim, too.

There is Mug Ledford contrary to rule  
He carried off rations and killed his old mule  
And there is Jim Ledford, a brother to Mug  
Got twenty-five dollars to stop up his jug  
(Barclay, *Ducktown: Back in Raht's Time*, p. 156)



The statement about Jim in this poem was to imply some truth as he had a saloon business later on in Butte, Montana and Idaho Falls, Idaho. Jim was a partial owner of the Overland Rye Whiskey Co. in Idaho Falls.

*The photograph taken in Butte, Montana*



W. L. enlisted in the Civil War for the Union Army in Indiana. He was enlisted as a private for Company "B" of the 18th Indiana Infantry Volunteers on July 2, 1864. He was discharged as a private in Georgia, August 28, 1865. He had attempted to apply for a pension in Butte City of Silver Bow County, Montana on September 12, 1890, but was denied. His second wife, Catherine, filed for the Widow's Pension on October 6, 1916, and received its benefits until her death in 1940.

After the war, William L. Ledford married Mary Jane Galloway in 1866. Mary Jane was the daughter of Rev. John Colby Galloway and Rebecca Moore. John Colby's father, John Colby Galloway, Sr., was instrumental in the Cherokee Mission at Cathy's Creek, North Carolina. This branch of the Galloway family originated in old Buncombe and Macon counties of North Carolina. By 1860, they moved into the northern parts of Georgia and then by 1870, they had moved into Bradley County, Tennessee where Rev. Galloway was a circuit riding minister of the gospel in both Polk and Bradley counties.

*... preaching the Bible to the mountain folks carrying his Bible and belongings in his saddle pockets astride horse back.*



Mary Jane died in Leadville, Colorado on April 15, 1884.

James E. Ledford, W. L.'s brother, did not see action during the Civil War. He stayed at home to care for their mother. He married to Matilda Brown on May 27, 1866 in Fannin County, Georgia. She was the daughter of John W. and Nancy Brown of Union County, Georgia. James and Matilda had the following children: Myra, Benjamin and John. James later acquired, a stepdaughter named Maude Moore from his second marriage. Matilda died in Leadville Colorado in 1887.

## The photograph of James E. Ledford

*Ducktown: Back in Raht's Time* wrote about W. L., who had played a small part in a Polk County Chancery Court case in Tennessee. He was called upon to give a deposition in one of the largest court cases its county has ever seen. The Union Consolidated Mining Company brought suit against J. E. Raht, John Thomas, and Charles Raht for \$1,200,000 in February 1876 in New York City. In parts this case had been heard in Benton, Tennessee. This case went on for 21 months after the original filing. The judge, Chancellor W. F. Cooper of Benton, heard this case originally, however, when the case was appealed to the Tennessee Supreme Court. Cooper had been appointed as one of the judges at that time. He was told to sit out on the proceedings. One of the attorneys of this case was P. B. Mayfield, who later served as one of the attorney involved with W. L. Ledford's estate proceedings. In spite what had been going on in court, what happened in Ducktown said differently:

*East Tennessee's Great Lawsuit did not reach the state supreme court until the fall of 1879. During this interim the whole future of both Ducktown and the Union Consolidated Mining Company had gone into total eclipse. The mines had been closed and abandoned, the company had gone into bankruptcy and J. E. Raht had passed away. Despite these misfortunes and tragedies, the pending lawsuit was carried to the higher court and there fought out as bitterly and as exhaustively as though closed mines, failure and death were but momentary diversions in a court of eternal session. (Barclay, Ducktown: Back in Raht's Time, p. 174)*

In 1878, many of the Copper Basin residents scrambled for other means of earning a living after their mining industry took a downturn for the worst. We suspect that James may have gone into business as the poet mentioned in Barclay's *Ducktown* ". . . and there is Jim Ledford, a brother to Mug [who] got twenty-five dollars to stop up his jug."

W. L. moved to Bradley County, Tennessee.

*My father continued on at the mines and soon had a small brood to support. After the birth of his fifth child (about 1876), he had about made up his mind for a change. So tried farming one year thinking to make a better living for his growing family but soon gave that up returning to Ducktown from Bradley Co., Tennessee where he was a share cropper that year on the Beeeler Farm in Tasso, (Bradley County), Tennessee. Again he went into the mines as a miner digging copper ore.*

*About the year 1876, there was a lot of talk going on about a silver boom in a mining town, Leadville, Colorado. The news and talk interested my father and his brother Jim, his uncles and kinfolks. So they had many meetings among themselves and at last a band of them decided it would not be a bad move for all of them, they had nothing to loose---all to gain in that far away land that was making rich men out of poor ones, overnite sometimes and where H.A.W. Tabor became famous with his Little Pittsburg mine. . . . So they consulted among themselves and the older kin and so made up their mind for the adventure to the Rockies.*

This is where we first begin to see traces of Joseph T. Stewart and Burgess Alonzo (B. A.) Edwards who both play a large part in the lives of both W. L. and Jim Ledford. Joseph T. Stewart (J. T.) is the youngest son of Jacob B. and Mary Ann Edwards/Stewart and brother to W. L. and Jim's mother, Catherine. (W. L. later leaves a legacy to "Aunt Anna Green" who is identified as Mary Ann Stewart or Mrs. John Green and a sister to J. T. Stewart.) Joseph T. Stewart married the daughter of James Witt. (Burgess Alonzo Edwards went on to become a prominent banker and was instrumental in handling the estate of W. L. Ledford in the many years following his death.)

From other stanzas of the poem written in *Ducktown: Back in Raht's Time*:

There is Jim Witt at the head of the store,  
Gives bread to the rich as well as the poor,  
When Cornwall and Stevens ran away in the night,  
Jim kept his position and came out all right.

And there is Joe Stuart a kinsman of Witt,  
Took lots in the store and owes for it yet.  
(Barclay, *Ducktown: Back in Raht's Time*, p. 157)

Apparently Joe Stuart was not the only one who "took lots in the store." W. L. took goods also as Joe Stuart told in a letter years later that he had paid for W. L.'s goods at that store before leaving to Colorado, but never told W. L. he had done so.

In late 1877 or spring of 1878, the two Ledford brothers, Joseph Stewart and other kinsmen, along with their families left for Leadville, Colorado.

*None had ever been out of the state of Tennessee before, only a few who had been in the Union Army up North, so they agreed to pool all their possessions - stock and provisions and money and make the trip overland by covered wagon route. So they started the trip from Ducktown, Tennessee for the long perilous trip across the plains to the mining town of Leadville, Colorado high in the Rockies to seek a fortune in silver there or better wage and opportunities for themselves and family, wages were good and high and work was plentiful and money easy to get. So after long months of adventure and hardships on the way, days of weariness and homesickness, nearly beyond endurance they plodded on, never giving up that of the goal they were seeking. Finally landing at Canyon City, Colorado without losing any member of their family but loss of some stock and provisions (were) running low. So some decided to stay awhile there and recuperate and rest, replenish their stock and money for the onward trip to Leadville.*

During this stop in Canyon City, Colorado, W. L. and Mary Jane had a daughter, Caroline.

*So at last with all ready again he landed at Leadville, Colorado with wife and six children, thus for a new child had been born at Canyon City, Colorado to add to the family of Ledford's.*

*At Leadville, Colorado father settled on Capitol Hill in a little white cottage and settled his family and then got a job on the police force of that city and later became (police) chief. He was a (man of) large stature being over 6 feet and weighing 200 lbs or more of brawn and muscle, he knew no fear of man.*

There was no 1890 census but both W. L. and Jim were found in the Leadville City Directories in several different years of the late 1880s.

When, in April 1884, W. L.'s wife, Mary Jane, passed away, being a widower with several children, he was forced to "farm out" four of his younger daughters. Louella and Ida, the eldest daughters, were likely allowed to stay and care for the Ledford household. Julia and Pearl, born after their arrival in Leadville, were placed with the widow of a Baptist minister in Denver, named Mrs. Lamb. Rebecca Dulcina and a sister, probably Caroline, were placed in the "Holy Name" Convent. A catholic organization in Denver. His sons, Thomas and John E. were allowed to stay with their father.

*There we lived until mother died and was buried there . . . far from home and (her) native land (of) Tennessee.*

In the early 1890s, W. L. moved his family north to Butte City of Silver Bow County, Montana. This move would prove to be the most provident thing he would ever do. He soon remarried to Mrs. Catherine (Erwin) Hodges. Catherine was the widow of William Hodges. She had two children. One from her previous marriage, Edward Erwin, and May Hellen, W. L.'s child.

James had also lost his wife in 1887. We know that he was remarried about 1890 to widow, Mrs. Belle (Carey) Moore, the widowed daughter of Hamilton and Catherine Carey. Hamilton was a shoemaker from New York who had moved his family to Idaho and later to Montana. James was living in Idaho Falls in 1900. Those living with him were Belle, Maude Moore (Belle's daughter) and William Stewart who was a bartender in James' Saloon. William was the son of

Alice (Brown) Stuart (Matilda's sister). He is listed as James' nephew at the age of 28. (He's also Catherine Stewart Lrdgford's nephew.)

W. L. was in Butte City by 1890. He was enumerated on the Veteran's Schedule on page 2, line-number 15 in the 7th Ward of Butte.

*Father later heard and read of the opportunity at Butte in the Copper Mines that Marcus Daly had discovered the richest copper mines and again men were getting fabulously rich in mines overnight. So again father made the decision to go to Butte, Montana, having failed to find the Pot of Gold at the end of the rainbow in Leadville, Colorado. So in the latter part of 1884 he landed in Denver, Colorado. He took his 2 sons, small then, to Butte with him. There he began again to mine for his living in the Copper Mines under the earth some thousands of feet and then again to the police force. Later to the mines again, getting hurt in the mines unable to work as a miner again, thru injury after months in bed with a back injury he sent for sister and I at the convent at Denver.*

*We came on to Butte and there I saw my father again after six years being away. I did not remember him, I was only 5 years when he left me at Denver, now I was going on 13 years, quite a big girl. Then father eventually recovered and then the task of job hunting began for he had been ill many months and debts and obligations had piled up on him and so he started out to find a job as ore checker - time keeper or similar job about the mines there in Butte. While on his way to a mine in quest of a job, he happened across this water running from the Anaconda and St. Lawrence Mines down a Gulch to Silver Bow Creek. So he sat down by that branch and rested and there he conceived an idea or a dream of something in that water brought back memories of things to him, he did not go on further to seek the job but became obsessed with some idea. So he kept after it and talked it in his family but none of them had any faith in his idea because he would now keep it a secret to them. So he sought Marcus Daily and then he personally got a lease on that water from the mines for 3 years duration, as was the custom then, 50 years ago. After the lease was signed and sealed he began to lay out the ground, some many yards up and down the hill just below the mines Anaconda and St Lawrence at Gaylord and Broad St., Butte, Montana. Now, this lease had to be 'just so' or else it could be broken, so he was restricted to just so much ground each way---no more no less so that he built his plant and began making metallic copper cement by his method unknown then to the Copper Companies or Marcus Daly the owner of these famous copper mines then. (He) made this copper by his process with tin cans and scrap iron and made it a commercially valuable product and out of it he acquired a good size fortune for his self after paying the company a 25% royalty on each dollar he made and became a very rich man out of the process.*

*After 3 years the lease was up he offered to reverse the royalty taking the 25 per cent and paying them the 75 percent he made for himself but they took over his plant (in) 1896 at the expiration of his lease and greatly enlarged the plant he built and continued to make copper cement by the same process and continued on now these past 50 years at the rate of \$6,000,000.00 annually at their plant at the Meaderville where they removed it and piped the water there where they continued to make this copper at present day.*

To better understand the copper precipitation process W. L. used in Montana. The following excerpts from *Ducktown: Back in Rath's Time* gave written details about this process:

*. . . a visiting committee of the Union Consolidated Mining Company in May 1860, telling how this was accomplished. Neither the chemistry nor the method of recovery by this process was discovered at Ducktown. For instance, the Mining Magazine of September, 1854 contained an article on cupreous water by a correspondent of the London Mining Journal. In this article it is stated that the metallic copper in water adheres to iron, if the iron is not rusty and that to prevent the copper water from injuring mining machinery that comes into contact with the water, sheets of scraps of iron should be placed in the cisterns and bottoms of the shafts. The article further revealed that during the working of the Ovoca Mines in Ireland nearly 16,000 pounds of copper was obtained by the method in the short space of seven years. . . .*

*Although the precipitation process was an old story even before the Ducktown mines were discovered and was then practiced here for nearly a quarter of a century after the mines were opened the method was apparently not generally*



known among the copper miners in some of our western states as late as the 1880's. For instance, a Ducktown miner, W. L. Ledford, known locally as "Mug" and "Fate", migrated westward after the shut-down in 1878 and through his knowledge of the precipitation process was able to make a fortune. Ledford noticed one day that water from the Butte, Montana, mines where he was employed was depositing a heavy coating of metallic copper on a pile of tin cans over which the water was running. Realizing at once what was taking place, the crafty miner from Tennessee moved into action. With all the blandness of a man buying the Rocky Mountains, Ledford requested and received for a nominal sum the right to utilize for two years the mine waters that were running merrily down the hill. He then began erecting and placing scrap iron in a system of long crude troughs. With these preparations completed he diverted the water into the troughs and waited.

In due course the water was drained off and the queer fellow was seen to get down in the troughs and begin sweeping the iron with a stiff broom. He was not scrubbing the iron as some probably thought. The full significance of what was taking place became apparent when Ledford began shoveling up huge quantities of sludge containing finely grained metallic copper. When this most pleasant chore was finished the water was again turned into the troughs. This routine went on for over a year, despite the fact that the mining company made vigorous but vain attempts to have the lease declared null and void. Upon expiration of the lease the company took up the process while "Mug" Ledford retraced his steps to Tennessee with some \$90,000.00 to \$100,000.00 which he had cleared on his unique enterprise.

The foregoing is another old story, one that was and still is familiar to older native citizens of both Bradley and Polk counties. But what makes it unusual is in that credit seems to be given in certain circles to Ledford for discovering the precipitation process and to Butte for being the place where it was first practiced.

For some additional information on W. L. Ledford, witness the following excerpts taken from a *Special Illustrated Trade Edition of the Cleveland (Tennessee) Journal*, published in December, 1900:

*Capt. W. L. Ledford, the subject of this sketch, was born in Cherokee County, North Carolina, and is 55 years of age. . .*

*Mr. Ledford was an employee in the copper mines at Ducktown, Tenn., where he commenced work at seven years of age, working there until 33 years old . . .*

*About this time he became imbued with the spirit of the great throng who were trekking westward in the hopes of bettering their fortunes and in accordance, in a two horse wagon, set sails for Colorado in 1878, finally landing in Montana in 1885.*

*While in the west Mr. Ledford discovered how to mine copper by a precipitation process and mines that were considered worthless were made profitable and thus Mr. Ledford was enabled in a short time to make a considerable fortune from his valuable discovery.*

*He returned to Bradley County in 1896, buying a farm of nearly 2,000 acres on the Hiwassee river, which he has improved and it now contains all the improvements of any farm in any agricultural locality.*

*Mr. Ledford is the richest man in Bradley County and owns the finest farm in the state. Although very wealthy, yet he is of a social disposition and has a good word for everyone. To know him is to like him.*

Although a republican in politics, he is one of Senator Clark's warmest friends. Mr. Clark is the democratic senator from Montana.

*It will be noticed in the foregoing article, too, that W. L. Ledford was credited with discovering the precipitation process. When the author inquired of certain older citizens who knew Ledford about why he permitted himself to be given credit for the discovery, they only smiled and replied by saying that "he probably did not think it was important."*

*As a matter of fact, 'Fate' or 'Mug' Ledford was for some twenty-five years in and around the mines at Ducktown before migrating westward. And during practically all these years there were systems of troughs filled with scrap iron at several mines where copper was being recovered by keeping the iron immersed in water pumped from underground. It was his foreknowledge of this chemical action that enabled him later to "work" the Anaconda interests for a huge sum of money. The precipitation process was obviously enough, not first practiced at Butte and neither Captain W. L. Ledford nor his brother Jim discovered in secret. Jim Ledford's name is associated by some with the Anaconda episode. Even as early as 1860, long before Butte was born into the copper kingdom, Eugene Gaussoin, in writing rather caustically of men who did not know all they should about copper mining, said ". . . because I believe every man engaged in copper business knows, or ought to know, that in some localities this process [the old and well-known process of cementation by iron] is the only way of collecting the copper." This method has long since been abandoned at Ducktown. (Barclay, Ducktown)*

*The Cleveland Herald wrote in 1895 this incident:*

*Mr. W. L. Ledford, who bought the Raht farm on the Tennessee River, was in town Tuesday mixing with old friends. Mr. Ledford was formerly a citizen of Ducktown but left there nearly twenty years ago and located in Colorado and became a prosperous miner. He now owns large interests in Colorado and has become what is known to the world as 'rich'. He will return to Colorado in a few days and bring his family to Tennessee.*

W. L. Ledford may have retired from the mining industry but he did not settle completely into the quiet life of gentleman farmer. He was about the age of 50 when he returned to Tennessee. Not so great an age that he was not still full of adventure. He continued to be involved in his family life and business in Tennessee . . . doing much business with N. Q. Allen of McMinn County, and Burgess Alonzo Edwards and the Mayfields of Bradley County.

When W. L. and Catherine Ledford returned to Bradley County, Tennessee in early 1896, they brought with them, their daughter May Helen and Catherine's son, Ed Erwin.

*My father retired to Tennessee, his home state, and bought a vast acreage of fertile valley farming lands in Bradley Co and an Island of 2,000 acres in the Hiwassee River and began the life of a Gentleman Farmer raising fine pure breed short horn cattle, hogs, horses and mules, raising much grain, corn, oats and hay and shipping to Chattanooga, Tennessee by boat on the river the Old John Wheeler . . . he being situated on the Hiwassee River and this Ledford Island being in the river. Surrounded on all sides by the river and its slue or arm, he had a palatial farm home near by but out of high water where he enjoyed his family life for years before he died. He had also a lovely home at Cleveland, Tennessee. . . .*

The 2000 acres of land was once owned by J. E. Raht, whom W. L. had associated with while working in the local mines in Copper Basin years before. The land became known as "Ledford Island" and is located on the mouth of Candy's Creek where it enters the Hiwassee River. His neighbors were the Sharps, Graves, Hoopers, Beelers and Sheltons. Later on he purchased the Tipton House in downtown Cleveland, of which is now placed on the Historical Register.

In 1897, two Wolfe brothers apparently had a grudge against W. L. Ledford. They shot him five times over a property rental dispute. The newspapers exaggerated reports of W. L.'s death. He did recover from his injuries, but his "death" had been reported in the Tennessee newspapers: Knoxville, Chattanooga, Cleveland, and then in Butte, Montana, Omaha, Nebraska and Dallas, Texas . . . just to name a few.

*The Anaconda Standard of Butte, Montana reported:*

*W. L. (Bill) Ledford, the father of copper precipitation in Butte, was shot in Knoxville, Tenn., by two brothers, Leather Wolfe and Joe Wolfe. In a quarrel over some property that he rented to the Wolfe brothers. An account of the killing was contained in the Alexandria, Va., Gazette which was received by Meyer Genzberger yesterday. They met Ledford on the street and fired five bullets into his body. Ledford was well known in Butte. He came here 10 years ago from Colorado and ultimately became city marshal. When he left the marshal's office he had his ups and downs until he hit on copper precipitation. He accumulated a fortune from \$75,000 to \$100,000 out of copper water in a couple of years. His money*

*was largely invested in land. He had a knack of getting his name in the newspapers. From the time he began collecting tin cans to use in the precipitating tanks to the time he was shot down in Knoxville, he was always before the public. His last in Butte was a lawsuit for \$10,000 damages brought by a Salt Lake girl, who charge he had seduced her under promise of marriage. He adjusted this case without going to trial.*

The mentioned trial occurred in July 1897 and the actual shooting occurred in Bradley County but was incorrectly reported as happening in Knoxville.

In December 1899, both W. L. and James got involved in a legal proceeding in Butte, Montana, when Thomas, W. L.'s son, died. The undertaker had attempted to overcharge W. L. for the coffin. The Butte News reported:

*He Denied All Liability, The Price of a Coffin and Funeral Expenses - The Cause of An Action - The Tennessee Ledford Says He Does Not Propose to Be Robbed by a Butte Undertaker - Has Been in the Business. George T. Thomas brought suit against James and W. L. Ledford for \$225. Mr. James Tachell, an undertaker, stated that \$225 was the cost of the coffin furnished Thomas Ledford, the deceased son of W. L. Ledford.*

W. L.'s rebuttal to Mr. Tachell:

*I received your undertaking bill from Mr. Ledford. I instructed my brother to have my son buried, but I did not instruct him to have an undertaker rob me. I know through my correspondence with a friend in Butte, not a relative, just what your casket was, it was a common pine box that cost about \$25 and no more. I also have the minister's letter who attended the funeral, stating he was buried in a common coffin. No, sir, you will have to cut your figures just in the middle \$87.50 to get any money from me. I had my daughter, when she died in Helena, brought over to Butte and buried, and the undertaker's bill, railroad, hearse and hacks, grave, flowers and, in fact, everything first class, and my whole expense was \$127.00. If you remember or will inquire, you will find I was in the Undertaking business in Butte myself, and I will gamble either you or my brother \$1,000, and come to Butte myself to inspect the casket, or have it done, that its cost did not exceed \$25. I am willing for you to make a fair profit in your business but my dear sir, I will not allow any man to make me stand and deliver.*

In the same article it goes on to say:

*In a telegram sent after the letter was written Ledford declared that \$100 was the limit of what he would pay for the burial of his son. . . . [H]e is also the father of the notorious Jack Ledford [John E.] who was recently convicted in the district court on the charge of attempting to kill his mistress.*

From an Idaho Falls newspaper

LOCAL

NEWS

*W. H. Cary and Myrtle Heath of Rosa came in town Monday and were married at the residence of the groom's uncle, J. E. Ledford. They will ranch at Rosa, which is located at the upper end of Swan Valley.*

On or about June 21, 1925 at least four newspapers in the Montana area carried very similar articles on the copper mining and precipitation business. The articles appeared in Butte, Billings, Helena and Missoula. All gave credit to Jim Ledford for "inventing" the method of precipitation. All were the same basic article. The headlines in Billings read:

*NEW COPPER FOR OLD IRON,  
Turning the junkman's refuse into the metal everlasting . . . tin can bill "holes out" in par . . . copper water drips from troughs on top through pans, thence to settling tanks . . . cutting down big pieces that go into the drip pans . . . from a few beds of tin cans - comes a fine crop of copper.*

The story was about a "new" precipitation process being used after W. L. Ledford had lost his three year lease.



Unfortunately, William Lafayette Ledford's story did not end with his death in 1907. He had written a specific will in 1905 with a codicil in 1906 just after daughter, Pearl, died. When he died the probate proceedings began, but unknown to the family at the time, it went on for many, many years. His son, John E., died in 1928 before ever receiving any of his \$12,000 inheritance. Of W. L.'s vast estate, his surviving wife and children received only very small amounts and were forced to sell the property he left to them in order to survive. W. L. was interred in the Fort Hill Cemetery in Cleveland, Bradley County, Tennessee near other family members. Catherine died in 1940. She was interred near May Hellen, daughter, Foster Wall, son-in-law and son, Ed Erwin.

James Edward Ledford's involvement in Idaho Fall's Overland Rye Whiskey Company was well noted. He and Belle were saloon keepers in Idaho Falls, Idaho in 1900. By 1910, his occupation was a "merchant" and living with him was Belle, Maude and her sons, Ledford, and Charles H. Storms. She has another son named Hamilton J. Storms. In the 1920 census, the Ledfords were living in Butte, Montana. Jim, aged 71 was still working as a "merchant."

James was in Butte at the time of the 1923 mine explosion that killed 126 men. James can be seen on film footage taken in the streets of Butte just after the tragedy. He remained in Butte for the remainder of his life. He died on September 27, 1928.

James and Matilda's son, Benjamin Franklin Ledford, married Fannie Wilhelmina Hazen. Wilhelmina was a well recognized portrait painter in southern California. The couple was married on August 27, 1877 in San Francisco, California. In 1884, Benjamin was a clerk in Leadville, Colorado. In 1892-93, he was listed in the Butte Directory, living in Mamie, Meaderville. By 1930s he lived in Los Angeles County, California. Benjamin and Wilhelmina had no children.

Myra Ledford, James' daughter, was born April 7, 1867. She married an Mr. Hughes, then after James' death, she remarried a Mr. Broadus. Myra died in Los Angeles County, California on March 3, 1969.

John E. Ledford, the last child of James and Matilda. We know that he was living in Oklahoma at the time of James death.

True to form for the Ledford brothers, James' death in 1928 became a controversial one. The Montana Standard wrote about his death: The headlines read: "Mystery angles Uncovered in Death of J. E. Ledford Found Shot Through Head" , "Old Timer Found Dead In Store" , "Wound Near Back of Skull and No Powder Burns Show, Say Those investigating Tragedy in Butte" , "Body Back of Counter", "In same place Veteran Business Man Killed (a) Man he said was attempting to rob him a few years ago."

Belle went on to live in Santa Barbara County, California with her widowed daughter Maude (Moore) Storms. James was interred in the Mt. Moriah Cemetery along with W. L.'s children, Lillie, Ida (Ledford) Dean and Thomas Ledford.

On W. L.'s 1898 photos.html Bureau of Pensions application the surviving children were listed as Thomas, Dulcina, John, Julia and May Hellen.

Of W. L.'s children:

- Louella (no trace of her)
- John E. (aka Jack) stayed in Butte. He later went to Goldfield, Nevada to pass away there in September 27, 1928. He died in a jail cell as a pauper.
- Thomas also stayed in Butte and must have continued to work in the mining industry. He died, May 29, 1899.
- Ida married Mr. Dean. She died in Helena, Montana in 1896 and buried near Thomas in Mt. Moriah Cemetery in Butte. Her father speaks of moving her body from Helena to bury her in Butte.

- Julia returned to Tennessee sometime after W. L. and Catherine did. She married Holt Ledford, son of Nobel Ledford (husband of Dulcina) and George Clayton. Holt went to Canada and died there with two children. Holt, Jr. died in France, in a plane crash, during WWII.
- Rebecca Dulcina married Nobel Smith Ledford an attorney from Harlan County, Kentucky and a distant cousin of W. L. They divorced, but she never remarried. Nobel went back to Harlan County, Kentucky. He died, October 3, 1936. She died in 1952 and buried at Fort Hill Cemetery, Cleveland, Tennessee.
- Caroline, her descendents were only recently found.
- Pearl married Nathan Renslow in Denver, Colorado. They returned to Tennessee just after the turn of the century. She died just after the birth of her son, Holt, in late February or early April, 1906. Nathan returned to Denver with his family and new wife who was housekeeper for he and Pearl.
- Ed Erwin, W. L.'s stepson continued to live with his mother, Catherine and buried alongside her and his sister, May Hellen.
- May Hellen married Nelson Zeigler, divorced. Later married Dr. Foster Wall. She was interred at the Hamilton Memorial, Chattanooga, Tennessee beside her mother, Catherine and brother, Edward Erwin.
- Lillie was born to Catherine and W.L., died at a young age. Interred in Butte at Mt. Moriah with James and others.

Joseph L. Stewart lived the remainder of his life in Idaho. He wrote home to his cousin Burgess Alonzo Edwards a few times to tell them of the Blackfoot land becoming available. Joseph, son of Jacob Stewart and Mary Ann Edwards both of North Carolina and Fannin County, Georgia respectively. He was the brother to W. L. Ledford's wife.

*Death of Joseph L. Stewart*  
 Well known throughout Montana and Idaho. News from the Silver Star tells us of the death of Joseph L. Stewart, a miner, well known throughout Montana and Idaho. His many friends in all parts of the state will be grieved to hear of his death. He was a man of sterling qualities. The funeral was held Monday under the auspices of the Odd Fellows Lodge of Twin Bridges. It was the largest ever held at Silver Star.

There is a historical legacy left by these two brothers and their kin that lies within a family of prominent people . . . descendents in Tennessee, Montana, Idaho, California and all over the country. It is written about on the pages of many newspapers and within a few books. They have made their mark in history and can definitely be considered a great American Success Story.

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**Author's Note:** This writer simply cannot conclude this narrative without this little story. The descendents of W. L. Ledford have diligently researched and written about him for almost 70 years. Three generations of Dulcina's family have researched his lineage for many years. Little was known. They had Dulcina's wonderful story and several other documents she had saved over the years but, still, there was very limited knowledge of him, his brother and his children.

A few years ago, W. L.'s great, great, great grandson, David Carroll and his Aunt had an accidental discovery. David has a bit of a hobby in attending estate sales. He and his aunt, Judy, had attended such a one at the old business of Mayfield and Mayfield, attorneys. (P.B. Mayfield was attorney for W.L and was also involved in the estate proceeding.) They had looked around for quite a while and were about to "give up" . . . that is until Aunt Judy opened an old safe and found reference to William Ledford. It's almost like W. L. and Jim had a hand, once more, in guiding the fate of their family. They purchased the entire lot of documents. What a goldmine for this family! Letters found were from Joseph Stuart and John E. Ledford from Butte written to Burgess Alonzo Edwards and W. L. that have been an invaluable

resource for this family's genealogical research. They have land deeds, cancelled checks, the mine leases from Butte, receipts and many, many other documents. A totally unbelievable find.

Cited Source:

Rebecca Dulcina Ledford, *William Lafayette Ledford Family History*, unpublished, circa 1946, used with permission.

R. E. Barclay, *Ducktown: Back in Raht's Time*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946.

For more reading concerning the local Copper Mining industry read:

- Katherine Thompson, *In Touch With the Past* (1982), P. O. Box 1222, Blue Ridge, GA 30513
- John Parris, *Mountain Bred, Tales by John Parris* (1967), Asheville, North Carolina
- R. E. Barclay, *Ducktown: Back in Raht's Time* (1946) University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- C. B. Glasscock, *The War of the Copper Kings: Builders of Butte and Wolves of Wall Street*(1935), Bobbs-Merrill Co.
- Roy G. Lillard, *The History of Polk County*