



TALLY, THE MULE

owen mould

We last left the Ferry system in charge of the dastardly mastermind of Public Greedy Enterprise twirling his moustaches as he lorded over the helpless Bay. Festus had become a newspaper reporter, and Jacinto had become an outlaw. Enough of that for now, for History, as we all know, is a pack of truth shuffled so many times it comes out as lies. Besides, way back in PolyHigh days, we paid no attention, but flung spitballs during class. Ah, the nostalgia. Never the less, here is a true story. I swear I am not making any of this up for I never have told a lie in my life.

Even as Jacinto's relations rambled about the mountains with his band of merry men to the chagrin of the Wells Fargo stages, there resided in the neighborhood of Brooklyn one Jackass by the improbable name of Tallulah Bankhead, who went by the appellation Tally for short.

Now Tally was owned by one Festus, whose father had obtained a *desueno* from the old government for some land on what was thought at the time to be an Island. Festus managed to lose the land when it turned out the place was fully landlocked and full of gold that he could not hold onto so he settled down by Brooklyn to run a livery stable and wagon repair shop.

Now Tally worked hard -- for a jackass -- for her oats and had few faults common to the species except for one and that one proved to be the undoing of both her and her owner. For Tally had been owned by the Franciscan Friars before coming into the hands of Festus and the Friars had treated Tally with their customary liberal use of the lash at every whim and fault. Furthermore, the particular stable where Tally had been housed -- the Franciscans in those days could not abide any living thing to roam free without sticking it behind bars or a wall -- had caused to be painted on each stall the image of that holy and revered saint amongst them, Father Junipero Bippy-Huragh. One day, old Tally took it into her head, in the way jackasses sometimes do, that she could not abide this insult to her feed and so kicked the painting in her stall to pieces. Then, taken out through the corral, she ran over to the statue of Bippy-Huragh standing in the middle of a fountain and kicked that one clean over the pool.

The response from the flagellant friars was as predictable as it was ineffective. Even as Tally went through the entire east side of the church, kicking out any stained glass that bore an image of a tonsured man wearing a robe she was pronounced an heretical Medodist and full of Lutheranism and would have met her end right there except for the cook, who had taken a shine to her and

pled for mercy. Now, anyone who knows friars knows that for all the self-denial and self-whipping in closets, the friars cannot abide anything to come in the way of a good feed, so the cook held particular sway, Nevertheless, something had to be done and done quickly. Before the place could be rendered a shambles by one jackass -- the official dissolution of the missions had already passed and things were bad enough -- Tally was put on the block up north (where no one would know of her peculiarities) and so Festus came into ownership of one peculiar jackass of whose history he knew nothing.

Now the days passed in honest labor as troupes of idiots ran up to the mines to hunt for gold and then trouped back broke and hopeless past just as many rushing back up again. Eventually people realized that gold does not "grow" in water, that it is a mineral, and that just as much labor must be spent digging it out of the earth-- and usually more -- as working in a comfortable office, and so everybody who was not making a killing selling shovels and placer pans went away to mine for silver in Nevada in places where the nearest drink of water for hundreds of miles might be in the form of a lizard crawling across a rock -- if you were so inclined to eat one alive -- but not before the miners really screwed up the land and killed each other with appalling frequency.

So that was the end of the Gold Rush.

But notwithstanding Yellow Fever, highway robbery, backbreaking work, rabid double-crossing, outlandish avarice, unrestricted gambling, wholesale destruction of the watershed, poor diets of beans and salt beef, racism of the worst kind, murder, land grabbing, and whoring of every description, when it was

all over, there remained a few -- there are ALWAYS a few -- who began to wax nostalgic about the "good old days" and they wrote about the tough yet sentimental 49'er and all the pleasant whatnot in the rustic days of yore -- even though those days of yore were barely a decade past.

Anyway, this was not to be a history lesson but a story about a particular jackass named Tally and times in which she lived. Let the story continue.

You all know about the time of the Vigilantes, when Law and Order meant a noose and a mob, but people got pretty sick of that sort of party and so they made all that Vigilante stuff illegal and so they thought they had it all resolved. Babylon by the Bay burned about six or seven times during the late 1800's until people really got sick of that behavior and started building houses out of metal and rock and so they thought that problem was all resolved. Along came the Great Earthquake of 1906, the whole city burned down and all the quality moved over to Oakland, where they have lived ever since.

Then there was the annexation of Brooklyn to Oaktown, and the rebuilding of Babylon for about the eighth time and what should follow from the founding of great cities but parties and galas and so the two cities by the Bay lobbied for the title of The City that Knows How and to host the 1915 International Expo. As it turned out some of Mayor Schmidt's cronies still besmirched the halls of Sacramento, so, as you know, Babylon won out and they built up the Palace of Fine Arts to host just some of it and most of Mayor Schmidt's cronies went to Federal Prison, albeit for different crimes.

Not to be outdone, and sensing opportunity when several native sons crashed spectacularly into the Bay from newfangled aeroplanes, Oaktown decided to hold its own shindig. The founder of the famous Black and White Ball was not, as commonly believed any 20th century matriarch, nor some fey journalist from New York, but one Beatrice Jacinto Lapunta. BJ, as she was affectionately called, set the first B&W Ball not in rough and rowdy Frisco, but in pleasant Oaktown, America's Family City. You can still see this sign commemorating Oaktown from the subway, ensconced amid picturesque body shops and acres of Pick-yer-Part yards.

Any rate, BJ had it in mind one year to hold a festive ball propelled with a nostalgic history theme. Just as today there would be several stages decorated according to theme, between which the gaily decorated participants would throng back and forth. She invited representatives from all of the major powers of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Now I just know you can see this coming already, so we'll spare the suspense.

Festus, well into his decided to haul his wagon into town pulled by the, by now very antiquated Tally and assisted by a couple more capable steeds. So it was that the night of the 1915 Black and White ball, Jacinto pulled up within sight of the particular stage that honored "Preconquest California", and disembarking from the cab was absolutely astonished to see Tally break loose from her traces and go galloping off god knows where. Much put out by this strain of events, but determined to make the best of it any how, Festus left his man in charge of the

wagon and went off to enjoy himself among the celebrants, Dame Sarah Truhis-McFergus upon his arm.

About that name, a mixture of Native American and something else, we will go into later.

Not an hour had passed when his man came running to fetch Festus to come rescue his prime jackass and furthermore save the city from certain disaster.

Now, it should be imagined that Tally was no ordinary jackass but one of gifted intelligence, and exceptionally astute perception, albeit somewhat stubborn. When the near 40 year-old animal perceived her arch-nemesis Bippy-Huragh -- in the form of a statue standing at the gate to the arena -- she must have realized that with so many people about she could not possibly stand a chance. So, the jackass kicked free, ran back home, fetch a number of other jackasses and ran back. Together the herd of them invaded the courtyard and began kicking the holy hell out of every image of the old conquistador friar that they could find as well as any image of any man wearing a robe, for 70 years puts a certain patina upon things such that no poor jackass could remember just how the man really looked. In addition, any man or woman so foolish as to try to intervene got sent sailing half a block for his or her pains, including the Potentate of Tonga and the Ambassador to Ethiopia.

Now it so happened that BJ had commissioned in her fancy numerous life-sized alabaster images of the saint to be placed all over the plaza and it was these that the jackasses commenced to demolish with great thunderous kicks of

the hind hooves, which must have sounded like a battalion of bazookas had anyone at that time ever heard such an appliance. From there, a few of them got loose and ran over to the Oaktown cathedral -- which had been fully restored after the quake of 1906 -- and began wrecking the place thoroughly.

Into this melee strode Festus, who, of course, could do absolutely nothing, but who could and did recognize the brand on his own jackass.

To bring the matter to a close, the matter which became known as "The Jackasses Who Destroyed the Priceless Statues", lived longer in infamy than did Tally, who ended up as several moderately priced bars of soap. Jacinto was charged with unlawful assembly, international incident, and parading without a permit, among other things, but was released with the stern injunction to keep his fool jackasses in line or hell to pay. BJ became the First Matriarch of California, and there are many who say even today that a particular Jackass was to blame.

At the end of the day, let it be said that if any jackass out there makes of himself an international nuisance, committing numerous improprieties and insults to decent people, then it just might be that he shall be turned into several bars of moderately priced soap. If not in the present, then certainly in the hereafter.

And there is no one who can deny that jackasses have had a significant input into the historical developments of the USA west of the Sierra Madre and other places further abroad.

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