

Episode Five

Black Bart – *The Gentleman Bandit*

Some scoundrels found it easier to steal gold from the miners than to work for it. One of the most notorious outlaws was Black Bart.

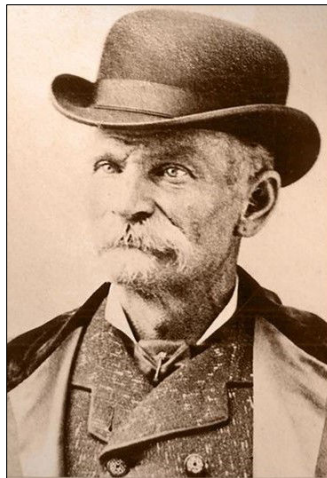
His real name was Charles Boles. He moved from England to the United States when he was a boy and lived in Illinois for many years. He was a wounded Civil War soldier, fighting for the Union Army.

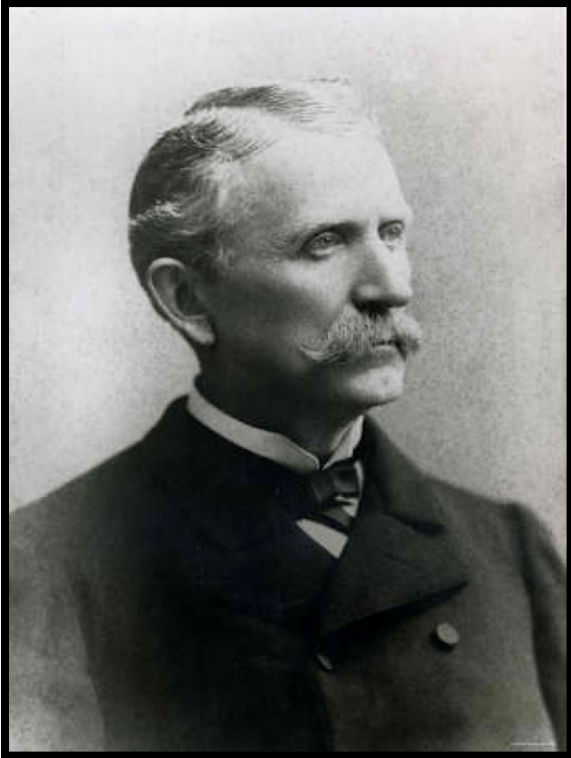
He came to California in 1849 during the Gold Rush. For about two years he worked his claims along the American River. But, like most '49ers, he went back to Illinois nearly broke. He returned to California after the Civil War.

Black Bart was extremely polite, always saying “please” and “thank you” during his robberies. His politeness earned him the reputation as the Gentleman Bandit.

Black Bart only robbed Wells Fargo stagecoaches and never stole from the passengers. The stages were often loaded down with gold from the Mother Lode mines destined for the San Francisco mint.

Historians say that Boles had a disagreement with Wells Fargo many years earlier and the robberies were considered his revenge.

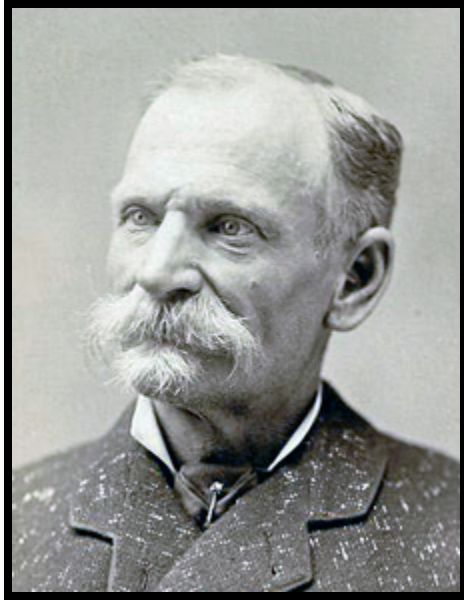




James B. Hume was once the sheriff in Placerville and Wells Fargo's chief detective for 32 years. Hume was considered one of the best in the business. Black Bart's intelligence and style made him a worthy adversary.



Black Bart never fired his gun during his 29 stagecoach robberies. He probably didn't even have the ammunition for it!



Charles Boles adopted the name Black Bart after reading a fictional story about a robber with that name. After leaving prison Black Bart just disappeared.



Black Bart was afraid of horses, so all of his robberies were made on foot.

To learn more about Black Bart please visit
www.history.com/this-day-in-history/black-bart-makes-his-last-stagecoach-robbery