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One of pioneer Nevada's more colorful, and controversial, figures, was the Virginia City prostitute, Julia Bulette. Although the legends that have grown up around her have by now obscured the precise details of Bulette's life, there is a general consensus among Nevada History buffs that in her heyday in the 1860s she was remarkably popular--at least among the male citizens of Virginia City--and, despite her profession, had achieved a considerable degree of respectability. As beloved as Julia Bulette may have been, events were to prove that affection for the kind-hearted prostitute was not universal among the Comstock citizenry. On January 20, 1867, Julia Bulette was found dead in her home, apparently the victim of a brutal murder.

The outraged citizens of Virginia City were not long in producing a suspect in the form of one John Millain, a handsome Frenchman who happened to speak very little English. Millain's trial commenced on July 2, 1867 and, perhaps predictably, he was found guilty of first degree murder. Several days later he was sentenced to death by hanging.

Convinced that Millain had not received a fair trial, Millain's attorney, Charles E. DeLong, appealed to the Nevada Supreme Court. Despite his vigorous arguments, DeLong was unable to persuade the majority to reverse the conviction of the District Court and a date was set for Millain's execution.

Millain's execution created a huge public spectacle as some 4,000 onlookers witnessed what would later be described by historians as the "most stupendous hanging Nevada had ever experienced." Millain maintained his innocence to the very end, but to no avail. As the hushed crowd watched, the unfortunate Frenchman marched up the steps of gallows and into the pages of Nevada history.

Narrator: Frankie Sue Del Papa. In 1987 Frankie Sue Del Papa became the first woman to hold the office of Secretary of State. In 1990 she was elected Nevada State Attorney General (1991-1999), becoming the first woman to hold that office. Prior to her term as Secretary of State, Del Papa served a six-year term on the University of Nevada Board of Regents. In addition to her distinguished legal and political career in Nevada, Del Papa dedicated herself to numerous community service activities. She supported efforts to improve the rights of women and helped organize the Nevada Women's Fund. A long-time supporter of the arts, she served on the Board of Directors of the Nevada Museum of Art and the Sierra Arts Foundation. She also chaired Nevada's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commission.

Frankie Sue Del Papa was born in Hawthorne, Nevada. She is a graduate of the University of Nevada at Reno, where she was a student senator and student body president; and obtained her law degree from the National Law Center, George Washington University. After graduating from law school Del Papa served as Law Clerk for United States District Court Judge Bruce Thompson.

Photograph of John Millain courtesy of the Nevada State Library and Archives.  
Photograph of Julia Bulette courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society.

[Ten Famous Cases of the Nevada Supreme Court, 1865-1937](#)