

1837-1904
AVERSCH, JOHN A.

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AVERSCH, JOHN A. (Go John), born in Pennsylvania, about 1837, of Italian [GERMAN?] parents but passed his boyhood in New York City; crossed the plains to the Nevada silver mines on the Comstock lode, where he made some money; enrolled at age 23 in Virginia City, Nevada Territory, October 8 and mustered into service at Camp Union, Sacramento, California, November 14, 1861, to serve 3 years as Private, Company H, 5th California Infantry; occupation when enlisted, Miner; went with the Company by sea to San Diego, California, and was stationed there during February and March, 1862; marched via Camp Wright to Fort Yuma where he served as hospital attendant from May to October, 1862; left with the Company for Tucson in January and reported sick in hospital there in February, 1863; placed under arrest in Tucson, April 29, and marched with the Company to Las Cruces on the Rio Grande and thence to Franklin (El Paso), Texas, arriving in June; deserted from confinement at Franklin, Texas, July 29, 1863, and fled to Mexico where he joined the French and Mexican troops supporting the government of the Emperor Maximilian in Sonora; after the defeat of the French invaders his life was saved by General Rafael Arguelo of the Mexican Army who gave him asylum in his home in Guymas and whose servants concealed him in a large clothes basket when Mexican soldiers came searching for him.

In Sonora Aversch learned to speak the Spanish language fluently; he was married by a priest to an Opata Indian named Regina Trujillo (1843-1902) at Basarac, in the District of Montezuma; she was a widow with two sons, Rosario and Inocente, and three daughters, Josefa, Ciracia and Cruz; they had no other children; he came with his family from Sonora to the Salt River Valley and is listed there in the U. S. Census of 1870 as a farmer, age 33; in his "Phoenix Manuscript" James M. Barney tells of him as follows :

"When the Hancock-Monihon building on the east side of First Avenue, a short distance south of Washington Street, was about completed—and which was to serve as the first real County Court-House—the Board of Supervisors finally decided that it was necessary to construct some kind of a jail for the safe and proper confinement of prisoners.

The plans and specifications for the proposed jail to be erected at the rear of the new adobe building, which was to serve as the County Court-House, were gotten up by Captain William A. Hancock. The contract for its construction was awarded—at the Supervisors meeting of October 11, 1871—to John Aversch, known by his comrades as "Go-John", who appeared to be the only bidder. His bid was for \$1,000.00 which was accepted—with the understanding that the original specifications were to be changed to read as follows: There shall be one chimney, and the lockup and hall shall be plastered and white-washed, and an additional sum of two hundred dollars shall be paid, making in all twelve hundred dollars—1/3 to be paid in warrants when the walls are completed and the roof on.

Mr. Aversch carried out the contract as per agreement and thus became the builder of Maricopa County's first jail.

By his contemporaries in the Salt River Valley, Aversch was known as "Go-John", a title he acquired by virtue of the following incident, as told by the late Martin M. Elders: 'To the north of Cotton's place—across the alley where the Noble Building now stands—was one of the first buildings put up in Phoenix—a large adobe structure which was turned into the first dance-hall in Phoenix. It was conducted by John Aversch, who was known to everybody as "Go-John"!

Aversch's wife was a native of Mexico, of very dark complexion, and spoke the English language rather imperfectly, her vocabulary being quite limited. One evening while Aversch and his spouse were driving in a small buggy along a country road, the former alighted and entered a watermelon patch that was handy, to pick a few watermelons for his own personal use. The wife remained seated in the buggy and seeing, in the distance, someone approaching the melon patch where her husband was busy selecting watermelons that were ripe, she started shouting—"Go, John, Go John,"—as a warning of approaching danger. John told the story of his adventure to his friends and from that day on John Aversch was known, far and near, by the sobriquet of "Go-John".

At one time he operated the Half-Way House and ranch on the Tempe road; was variously engaged as a miner, freighter, trader, tobacco grower and lastly as a truck gardener; died at his home two miles west of Tempe, Maricopa County, A. T., October 27, 1904; buried in the old Williams Cemetery, on the Tempe road, near the present site of the Tovrea packing plant,

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Great Register of Maricopa County, A.T., 1881-98.

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The Adjutant General of the Army - Military service records.

Orton, R.H. - Records of California Men in the War of the Rebellion, Sacramento,
1890, p. 710.

Barney, J.M. - "Phoenix Manuscript" .

The Arizona Republican, Phoenix, January 3, 1903 and October 29, 1904.

The Tempe News, November 4, 1904.

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Any references to him in the newspaper indexes.