

## Synopsis of story of Leonidas Douris aka Shorty Davis.

Just over a year ago I decided, after putting together my family tree, to find out a bit more about my Great Uncle Leondias I Douris. All I had to go on were the stories that had been handed down. We were told he had gone to America, had acquired a ranch but had been murdered and his ranch taken over by others. His youngest brother, my Grand Father had gone to America and claimed the estate bringing back a sum of money that was then divided amongst the surviving brothers. (see the family tree ref: Ev2001Gr)

My father was born in 1908 the year after my Grand father's trip to America and was named Leonidas after his dead Uncle.

At the time of starting this search all that I had in my hands were two letters, one from the American Embassy in Smyni, Asia Minor and the other, a follow up letter, from A.J. Derby to my Grandfather dated 1910 which pinpointed the area in America as Prineville, Oregon.

There were also some Greek documents that are receipts signed by each of the brothers for their share of the money from the estate.

My initial search was thwarted as I could not find any information at all under the name of Leonidas Douris. I hired a professional who, through a contact in Prineville, finally uncovered that Leonidas had changed his name to Elias Davis and has also acquired the nickname of "Shorty Davis". From this point on we started to be able to put the pieces of this story together.

The research is still on going as we have yet to solve the mystery of who killed "Shorty" though we do at least now have a number of valid suspects. I am, once I feel I have all the information available, going to write a book about his life and death but for the moment felt it was time to put some information up on the Douris site so have chosen this method.

Below is a collect of known facts to date about his life and death. At the end I have written some further information and the sources of the research. I could not post this on the site without acknowledging the vast amount of help I have had from those in Prineville. I hope you will find this story as fascinating as I have.

### Leonidas Douris son of Ioannis Douris and

- Born 1854 - second of six sons
- Declared missing presumed dead on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1900
- Property put up for sale by September of 1900.
- Only advertised for heirs for 4 weeks.
- No Heirs found and so estate sold for very little by the state.
- Sale was completed by 1901.

## Description according to court transcripts and articles.

- Short and stocky. Long arms, big head, short legs.
- Dwarf like. (note: no dwarfs in the rest of the family)
- Never married.
- Well thought of and liked by neighbours.

## Early Life:

- Grew up in Evdilos Ikaria.
- Went to sea at an early age.
- He was Ship Wrecked in the Black Sea. - He was one of only 2 who survived.
- Not known when he left Ikaria or the reason for leaving.

## Life in America:

- Arrived in America in 1877 aged 23 - according to his Naturalisation papers.
- No point of entry yet found.
- Known to have worked in San Francisco for a few years according to witnesses at the court Court case (claim for his property by his brothers) in 1907.
- Also at the Trial it was stated he had problems with fellow Greeks in San Francisco and therefore moved on and changed his name.
- Other information of his time there is non existent as he has not been found in any records.
- Missing years 1877 - 1881.
- Known to have arrived in Central Oregon around 1881
- Filed for Citizenship in Portland.
- Acquired it in 1886 in Prineville.
- Had stated on papers that he arrived in USA in 1877.

## Life in Prineville:

- Worked as a sheepman - paid in sheep.
- Was in partnership with Ewell for a few years according to tax records.
- Bought his first piece of land in 1889
- Last parcel of land awarded to him in 1901 after his death by government.
- In total he had 800 acres when he died.

## **Known facts about his disappearance and Death:**

- Stated as disappearing on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1900
- Search for him discovered nothing.
- Reward offered.
- Horse and Dog missing from his Farm
- There was nothing else missing from his house or ranch.
- He was a sheep farmer with a few cows.
- It was the end of the shearing season and there was 14000lbs wool in his barn.
- Ranch wars were prevalent at the time. Cattlemen v Sheepmen.
- He grazed his sheep on Government land, as well as his own, which was legal.
- Cattlemen also wanted to graze their herds on Government land.
- They are incidents around the same time of Cattlemen killing Sheepmen.
- His estate was put up for sale by September which indicated that someone knew he was actually dead and was not coming back.
- His estate was sold for much less than it was worth.
- His body was never found though there are reports that some bones were found years later - as yet we have not found any further information about the bones that definitely confirm the bones belonged to Shorty.

## **Synopsis of other facts known:**

Numerous articles have been written about Shorty and his disappearance. Some un-truths have been perpetuated. Closest to the truth is an article by David Braly written for a magazine a while ago and reproduced in volume 2 of "Little known Tales from Oregon history".

When he was naturalized he had stated on his papers, that he was from Montenegro on one and Albania on another. He had not acknowledged he was from Greece on any of his legal papers.

This could be because he had left Ikaria, Greece due to trouble with the Ottoman Authorities (Ikaria was ruled by the Ottoman Empire until 1912) but this is only a theory. Another theory could be that being Dwarf like he was not well treated by his father. When the Ottoman Empire left in 1912 they took all their documents with them so there is no way of checking in Ikaria at all.

Lawyer Andrew J Derby got involved in 1905/6. Not sure as to why. At the time there was a land case being tried in Portland and reference was made in court to Shorty by one of the witnesses. It is reported that through 3 brothers -

Mavrikes brothers - he was put in touch with a John Saphos in San Francisco and he was able to ascertain that Shorty Davis was in fact Leonidas Douris from Ikaria.

In 1905/6 Derby lived only 2/3 blocks from where the Mavrikes brothers had a shop and restaurant in Portland. Through the American Embassy in Smyrna Shorty's brothers were notified of his death and of the fact that the state had acquired his estate. The American Embassy advised the brothers to appoint A.J. Derby as their attorney and for one of them to travel to Oregon to deal with the matter.

Constantinos, the youngest brother, was appointed to represent the family and together with the relevant Power of Attorney from the other brothers travelled to Oregon. Records show that he entered through Ellis Island on the 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 1907.

The first court case to claim the estate ended in the court saying that Constantinos had not proven that Shorty Davis and Leonidas was one and the same person. For the second court case (1907) the following witnesses were called.

- ❖ D.H.P. Belknap
- ❖ W.J. Wright
- ❖ C. Sam Smith - Sheriff
- ❖ Percy Davis
- ❖ Jack Cadle
- ❖ Geo Ray
- ❖ Arthur Hodges - known to have been advisor to Shorty when he was alive.
- ❖ W.A. Booth - had been appointed Administrator of Shorty's estate in 1900.

John Saphos acted as Interpreter for Constantinos Douris. Witness included one of the Mavrikes brothers but the main evidence seems to have been an affidavit from a Nicholas Morris taken in San Francisco.

The family only got about 8000 \$ as they only got what the estate was sold for which was way below the real value at the time less costs. The money was divided between the brothers less money held back to pay for a water pipe to be brought to the area of the Douris family houses.

The Mavrikes brothers came from the same village on Ikaria that Shorty's mother. So we have presumed this to be their connection with him. Saphos seemed to have been in San Francisco with him and did come from this island but not from the same side of the island.

A theory is that Nicholas Morris was also a Mavrikes ... as the surname Mavrikes if translated from the Greek to English letters would be written MAURICES which of course when pronounced would be the same as Morris. This person is a bit of an enigma as we have not been able to find any record of him in San Francisco. We know the name of the attorney who took the affidavit but as yet not been able to trace any records.

**Documents include:**

- Census
- Land records
- Tax records from Oregon - nothing from California
- Inventory on death
- Naturalisations papers
- Military Roll
- Probate
- Court records from the claim to the estate.. (Witness statements were missing)
- Other bits and pieces...

**Documents that would be interesting to find:**

- ✚ Witness statements from Case
- ✚ Sheriff records from report of Shorty being missing and the search.
- ✚ Sheriff records from Larkin Elliott case.
- ✚ Sheriff records from Statement of Oscar Black naming Alvis Pierce Jones as the killer.
- ✚ Interesting to observe that when the reported Kate Wennerstrom from CASCADE tried to find these records she found a bit of a brick wall - people were still reluctant to talk.
- ✚ Any records from his time in California
- ✚ Anything that would shed light on where they buried him.

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I Hope this gives an idea of the work done to date... my hope when starting this quest was to be able to find a grave to put flowers on. I did not know at that time that my Great Uncle had actually disappeared and there was no body found. I visited Prineville in March 2008 and was astounded by the reception I received.

Even after 108 years since his disappearance the people of Prineville still ask themselves the question "What happened to Shorty".

The help I have received both from the ladies at the local Genealogy Society based at the Bowman Museum in Prineville and the ladies that work over at the Courthouse has been invaluable. They give their help so willingly I will never know how to thank them.

My researcher Peggy Baldwin has also proved invaluable and has become a friend, without her professional help I would never have gotten so far. My thanks also to Kate Wennerstrom who is a reporter in Prineville. Kate interviewed me when I was over in Prineville and wrote an excellent article for the local magazine "Cascade".

The search goes on .... Watch this space .....