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"Nine Months After His Murder, Sprockett Widows Come Forward," Article in *The Denver Ledger*

by Robert Cooperman

"Skunk fumes flower in the Rockies:
no less than five women now claim
to be lawful widows of John Sprockett,
stating that their infants were sired
by that notorious gunman and drunk.

"It is ironic that while he lived,
Sprockett--his face hideously carved by a bear--
was spurned by women, some fainting
at his slashed visage and the empty
eye-socket he paraded for spite;
daughters of joy refused his trade.
But dead, his ruthless gun assures him
the belated affection of bedazzled females;
their illegitimate offspring, spawned
in ditches or against the walls of saloons,
claimed as lawful products of his infamy.

"Lust for gain can be dismissed as a motive,
since he left only a horse, saddle, traps,
and a dog-eared collection of verse--
stolen on his one stage-coach robbery attempt--
this last item he willed to an Englishwoman,
Sophia Bennett, for much of 1873 his employer.
Perhaps the thrill of danger prompted these females
to invent a bond to one who ravaged
Bloody Kansas like a booty-crazed Mongol,
half pauper, half rabid mastiff.

"In a related series of incidents,
at least 41 infants have been named for him.
That so few mothers honored martyred President Lincoln
and so many paid homage to this outlaw is shocking.
The best that can be said for Sprockett
is that his unquiet soul is finally at rest;
but judging from his life of combustible violence,
it is doubtful he sleeps with the angels,
or even the penitent toilers in Purgatory."

