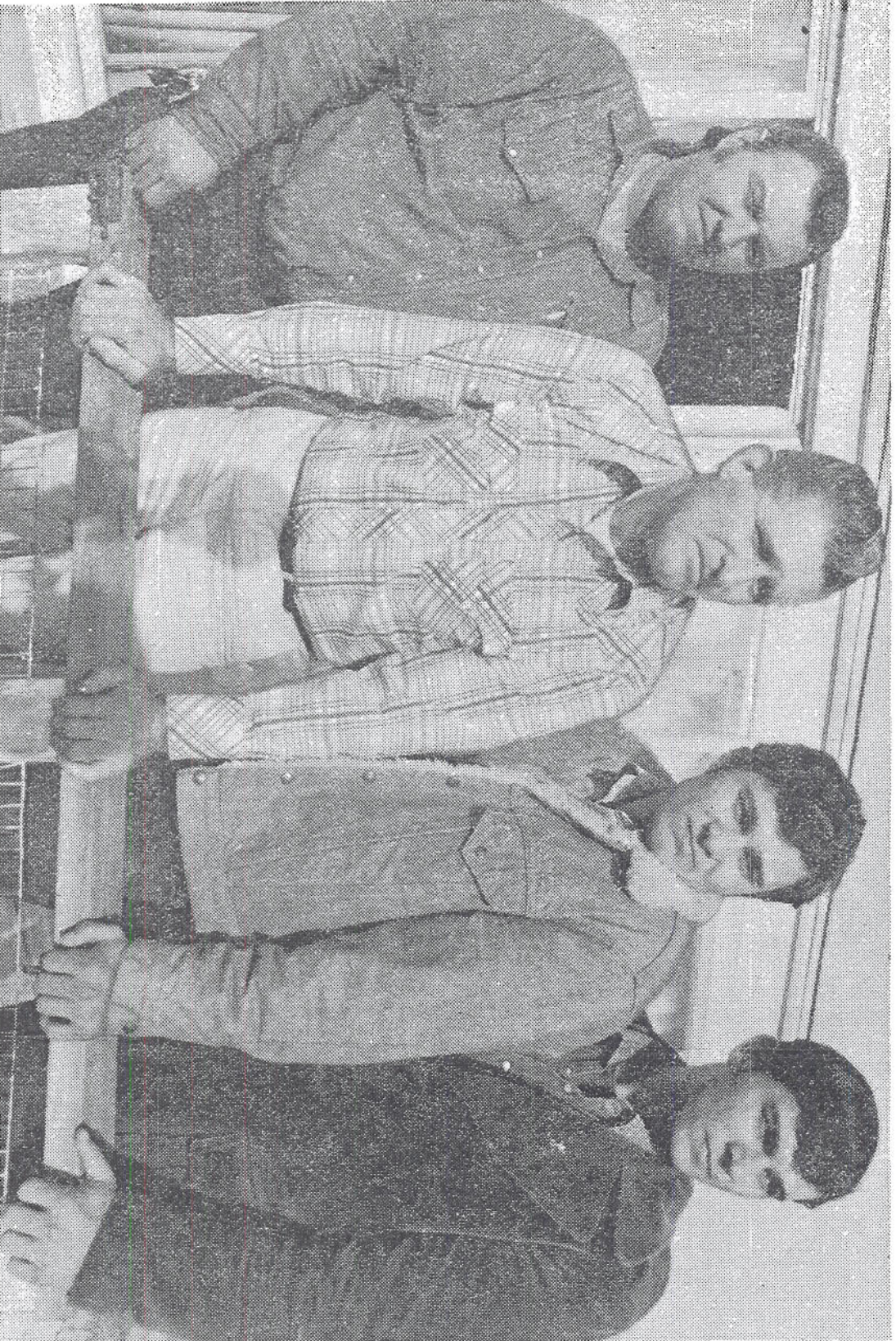


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# Frustrated Family



The patriotic Sampsons of Petaluma: Howard Jr., Howard Sr., Floyd and Tony

# Parking Meter Case Tossed Out

By Peter Slack  
Chronicle Correspondent

## Petaluma, Sonoma County

A Santa Rosa Judge yesterday deprived the Sampson boys—members of a fundamentalist church family of fervent patriots—of a chance to test the constitutionality of Petaluma's parking meter law.

This former egg basket of Northern California has an ordinance that makes it a misdemeanor to put coins in other drivers' parking meters.

Tony Sampson, 20, and his twin brother Floyd, were arrested last November for openly buying parking time for every car parked on Petaluma's main drag.

"We did it in full view of a

meter maid, and the cops swooped in and arrested us," said Floyd Sampson.

"We wanted a jury trial to prove the parking meter law is a typical example of how governments rob people of their basic rights," said Sampson.

"There's nothing about parking meters in the U.S. Constitution, and nothing that says I can't pay another man's parking meter expenses if I want to," he said.

The brothers demanded a jury trial but a local judge disqualified himself and the matter was put before Judge Frank Passalacqua of Santa Rosa Municipal Court.

Passalacqua tossed out the case yesterday on grounds of "insufficient evidence," thus preventing the Sampsons from test-

ing the law's constitutionality.

The twins had subpoenaed the entire city council as well as Mayor Helen Putnam as witnesses.

The Sampsons had also filed a \$1.5 million claim against Petaluma, contending they were victims of "selective prosecution."

The family is headed by Howard Sampson, 51, who lives with three rugged sons outside Petaluma.

The Sampsons are leaders of the Sonoma Chapter of Posse Comitatus, a vigilante group that believes the Constitution is the only body of law Americans should obey.

The organization is adamant in its stand against any laws that regulate business, property ownership and particularly the right to keep guns.

The Sampsons support themselves by operating a paving company that is the business end of a Fundamentalist church of their own founding, Field of the Wood.

The family compound, posted with trespass warnings, is dominated by a large mobile home complex. Road grading and other heavy equipment is parked over several acres. Things look run down.

The elder Sampson likes to say publicly that if any cop dares

to step on his property without permission, he'll shoot to kill.

"I'll aim for the head," Howard Sampson said.

"We are living in a police state now," he continued. "It's time for Americans to wake up to freedom and God."

Howard Sampson first became noted in Sonoma last year when he was convicted of operating his church-owned paving firm without a contractor's license.

For most of last year the family was continually entangled with lawmen and government officials.

The younger Sampsons, including Howard, Jr., 25, have been arrested many times for infractions of traffic laws, including blowing their truck horns "excessively."