

The Blackburns



The first verse of the English nursery rhyme *Sing a Song of Sixpence* ends with the couplet “four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie.” If, as scholars believe, the rhyme was referring to the infamous *Dorchester Fracas* of 1898, then the information is patently false. First of all, there were only nine entities in the pie, not twenty-four. Second, they weren’t blackbirds but rather *Blackburns*, family members in town for a reunion. Finally, while it’s true a maid (an *au pair*, really) had her nose pecked off, it was not done by a blackbird but, again, by a *Blackburn*: Chad, a disbarred cosmetic surgeon who’d had too much to drink. And his disfiguring of the young woman – no matter it turned out to be reversible – led to the worst melee *Dorchester* had ever witnessed.