

Annie Skinner

RESCUE WOMAN TELLS MEMORIES OF INDIAN TRAVELED EACH YEAR FROM DEER VALLEY TO PLUNKETT

The following very interesting paper concerning a tribe of Indians which inhabited the Rescue section 50 years ago was read by Mrs. Annie C. Skinner at a recent meeting in that district:

Fifty years ago there was a camp of Indians about a ½ me from my house. We were all children at that time and were very much interested in what the Indians were doing so we visited their camp quite often. The names of the two older Indians were Frank and Mary and they had several relatives and friends who would come to visit them. They lived in a small cabin and wigwam. The wigwam was made of poles and bark. There was a fire in the center of the wigwam and all would sit around the fire in cold weather, never caring how much the fire would smoke. One of the Indians lived in a little prospect hole with a little bush and bark over the top.

They had plenty of meat such as venison, quail, rabbits and all kinds of birds. They caught the birds with snares made from horse hair. They gathered lots of acorns dried them and made them into flour. Large holes were worn into rocks where Indians hammered the acorns into flour. They put the acorn into large baskets which they made from willows and put enough water on the flour to cover it. Then they would build a big fire and heat a lot of rocks. They put the hot rocks into the flour and it would boil thick. When the acorn mush was cooked and cool, they would all sit around and eat it with their hands. They also made a soup they called "lower soup". It was made of white flour. They never ate anything very warm it always had to be cold.

They made beautiful baskets of a certain kind of willow. They never allowed us to touch any of their belongings and would say we mustn't spoil it. We just admired their baskets and would have liked to have had some, but they never parted with any of them. They were very hard to deal with when it came to trade.

The squaws did all the work. They had a flat board strapped over their head and the baby was tied to the board that's how they carried their children. They went to Plunkett in the summer and would return to Deer Valley in the winter. Plunkett is 4 miles from Latrobe. They kept a number of small ponies to haul their supplies around.

They always took care of what they had. They cut their hair short. When one would die they had a big pow wow. They would make a fire and burn all the clothing belonging to the deceased and would also tar their faces for several days. They were great mourners for their dead.

This article was originally published in the *Mountain Democrat*, October 3, 1930. It was again published in the Rescue Historical Society newsletter

October, 1999.

Jasper and Anna Jurgens

THE PIONEERING JURGENS OF WEBER CREEK

Anna and Jasper Jurgens were one of many brave and determined pioneer couples who started their married life as a great adventure in route to search for gold in California. Both having been born on the Island of Heligoland off Denmark in the North Sea, they married October 3, 1853. Faced with Europe's economic decline the Jurgens booked passage on a ship bound for San Francisco.

During the six month "honeymoon" voyage Jasper proved to be a hero. A frightening storm erupted and heavy winds broke one of the ship's masts. Although the ship's captain believed he should turn the ship around and head back, Mr. Jurgens went to work to repair the mast. As the ship was tossed and rolled in heavy seas Jurgens repaired the splintered mast and on they sailed.

Upon arriving in San Francisco, the Jurgens left for Sutter's Fort at Sacramento. In June, 1854, they purchased a store on Weber Creek, El Dorado County. Hardship continued for the couple when the devastating flood of 1863 wrecked havoc along Weber Creek. Reports said the water in the creek had never been so high. Water rushed into the Jurgens' home, reaching heights of two feet. They suffered tremendous property loss including, "a ten stamp mill, a barn full of hay, a good sized house and miles of flume which was fastened with iron rods to rocks". The estimated loss was \$10,000. A great sum for the times.

The Jurgens family grew to include four boys and three girls. They were actively involved in the mining community. Anna recalled life in the once "lively" town of Weber Creek, where parties were held sometimes with two bands playing! She remembered there being, "plenty of wine but drunkenness and fighting was almost unknown".

After suffering the loss of the 1863 flood and with mining not as lucrative as it once was, the Jurgens sold their store and planted a vineyard. In 1874, they relocated but returned to their Weber Creek home in 1886.

Jasper was described as "highly respected" when he died May 26, 1911. Anna was described as "beloved by all who knew her", and survived for another thirteen years.

Information for this article is from the obituaries of Anna and Jasper Jurgens as published in the *Mountain Democrat*. This article was originally published in the Rescue Historical Newsletter, March, 2000.

Marcus Starbuck, Nettie Russell, James and Ellen Russell, Peter and Sue Calyer

A MINER NAMED STARBUCK

Starbuck was a familiar name in the Rescue area long before Starbuck's Coffee became popular! For many years there was an active growing family where a road winds through western El Dorado County, both (road and family) named Starbuck. Marcus Starbuck was born into a prominent Nantucket Island whaling family, November 20, 1861. He first boarded a whaling ship at the young age of sixteen. In an *Oakland Tribune* interview published January 21, 1948, Starbuck recalled, "Five times around the Horn [Cape Horn] and twice through the Straights of Magellan I landed in San Francisco on the *Oracle*, April 1, 1877, and then the gold fever got me and I still have it."

Peter Calyer and his wife received word of their nephews arrival in San Francisco on May 1, 1877. The Calyer's and their neighbors, Nantucket natives James and Ellen Russell anxiously awaited Starbuck's arrival in El Dorado County. Arriving on Sweetwater Creek May 31, Starbuck immediately began his search for gold working alongside Calyer and Russell. In the *Tribune's* 1948 interview Starbuck credited Russell with turning him, "from the sea to the quest for gold." In addition to mining, the men tended their garden, cultivated vineyards and reared cows and pigs. Only once did Starbuck travel back to Nantucket. In 1888, his Nantucket family encouraged him to again try a whalers life. After a short time at sea Starbuck returned to Sweetwater Creek. Determined to build a life for himself mining and ranching. In 1948, Starbuck said of the Rescue area, "Lots of ground that's been worked over still has plenty of gold in it. In the old days, there was so much ground to choose from that the first miners would get tired or restless and leave one diggings for another." But Starbuck stayed.

The Russell's noted that on Starbuck's visits his attention turned from gold mining discussions with James to Russell's daughter Nettie. Starbuck and Russell's oldest daughter began to attend social events together. On December 31, 1890, Marcus and Nettie were united in marriage at the Russell home, by El Dorado County's legendary Episcopal minister, C.C. Pierce. Together the Starbucks worked the land and became involved in and hosted many of the areas social activities. Three children were born to Marcus and Nettie, Carita (Williamson), Florence (Lynch-Pratt) and Frank. On December 25, 1941, the Starbuck's celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary during a family Christmas dinner. In the early 1940s, while panning next to his house on Sweetwater Creek Starbuck picked up a nugget worth \$195.00. Starbuck never gave up hope of finding the big strike! While mining and ranching Starbuck continued to maintain an active social life. Shortly before his death he could be found with his pick on his shoulder and his gold pan under his arm with the belief that there was still a nugget or two to be found in Sweetwater Creek. On April 16, 1949, Starbuck died at this 170 acre

ranch. Nettie continued to live on the Starbuck ranch until her death in 1952, at the age of 82 years. The Starbucks are buried in the Jay Hawk Pioneer Cemetery.

Information for this article came from family records, *The Oakland Tribune* and *The Mountain Democrat*. This article was originally published in the Rescue Historical Society Newsletter in November, 1997. _

Robert McBeth, Robert McDougall, Catherine Williamson (McBeth, Jackson)

A BRIDE'S WELCOME TO EL DORADO COUNTY

In the early 1860s Robert McBeth, mining along Weber Creek, El Dorado County, received a letter from his sister, accompanied with a picture of his niece, Catherine. When McBeth's mining partner Robert McDougall saw the picture he responded, "Did I tell you about going to a fortune teller in Glasgow and that she showed me a picture of a girl she said I would marry? Well, this is the girl!" Convinced that Catherine was to be his bride McDougall wrote her. After exchanging letters Catherine accepted his marriage proposal and McDougall headed east to marry and bring his bride west.

The Oakland Tribune, wrote of Catherine's arrival in El Dorado County, "When they reached San Francisco they took a river steamer to Sacramento, where they arrived early the next morning. Catherine put on her best dress and her dainty bonnet with pink rose buds on it to meet Robert's friends, not realizing how far she had to ride over dusty roads via stage coach. There were many hotels where they could stop for refreshment along Green Valley Road. They passed the Engesser House, Wings Store, a brick building and on top of the hill was the Rising Sun House built and run by the Pelton family. Down the hill from that was the Rose Spring House, owned by John William Hodgkins. A short way from there the road turned north and they crossed Dry Creek and came to Biddie Keefer's Somerset House with its large oak tree in front. Under the oak tree was a well of cold water where everybody stopped for a drink. Half a mile from there was Gaylord's Bridge and home! Among the friends who came to greet them was Robert McDougall's Chinese foreman, who seemed very pleased to meet the new wife. She wore her hair parted in the enter and smoothed down flat at either side of her face, a coil forming the nape of her neck. It was like the Chinese women wore their hair, but there were few Chinese women in California in those days. The foreman asked if he could bring his men down to see Catherine and she consented. So one day a whole gang, dressed in their best with their queues freshly braided, came down to call on her. They stood off in one corner of the room and chattered and gestured and seemed to want something. Finally Robert asked the foreman what they wanted. "They want to touch her hair. It is so long since they have seen a Chinese woman and her hair is like the women in my country," he explained, "would she mind?" Catherine said she wouldn't mind. So they formed a line and filed past her. As each man passed he put out his hand and stroked her hair. Some would put only a finger on it and then jerk his hand back quickly. The chattering and laughing was terrific. It was a great experience for Catherine.

Note: Robert McDougall died September 7, 1876 and is buried in Rose Springs Cemetery, Robert McBeth died March 22, 1911 and is buried in San Mateo, Catherine McBeath -Jackson is buried in Bakersfield, California.

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THE RESCUE POST OFFICE
ESTABLISHED JULY, 12, 1895

Dr. Merritt A. Hunter, Post Master founding until death June 22, 1896

Mrs. Mary Hunter (wife of Merritt), Post Master until December 30, 1897

William H Carpenter (Mrs. Hunter's son), Post Master until March 7, 1938

Mina (Carpenter) Pratt-Johnson, appointed Post Master May 6, 1938

Flo Ann Weir, appointed Post Master 1945

Ila (Wing) Brazil, appointed Post Master July 1, 1962

Richard Harvey, appointed Post Master November, 1986

Debora Bell, appointed Post Master September 26, 1998

This listing of Post Masters of the Rescue Post Office was originally printed in the July, 1999 issue of the Rescue Historical Society Newsletter.