

Nuggets of History

A genealogical snapshot: Philip and Catherine Numbers

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Philip Numbers was born on February 19, 1824, in Fayette County, Pa.

He was the son of John Numbers (born 1793) and Nancy Linton (1797 – 1886). His family moved to Ohio when he was a boy. Then in the fall of 1843, Philip moved with his family from Holmes County, Ohio to Fulton County, Ill.

One year later his family moved back to Ohio, leaving Philip in Illinois. Catherine Shaw married Philip on May 28, 1849, in Fulton County, Ill.

Very little is known about Catherine, but it's believed her father was John Shaw, leader of the wagon train that she and Philip, as a young married couple, came west on.

"Pioneer Footprints," an article in the *Cottage Grove Sentinel* written in 1935 by Miss L. J. Taylor, gives an interesting story of the Numbers family.

Miss Taylor writes: "In the summer of 1854 they crossed the plains with John Shaw's wagon train."

Philip, Catherine and their first daughter, Nancy Numbers arrived in Oregon on September 8, 1853, and settled in the Hebron area of Lane County. They claimed one half section of public lands containing 318.20 acres.

"The south half to husband, north half to wife," stated the document. This land is on the west side of Cottage Grove Lake near the dam. Most of it lies under the lake. Nearby 'Numbers Creek' is named for this family.

Their second child, Sarah Melvina was born March 29, 1854. By 1857, Catherine had passed away.

Miss Taylor wrote that there were five graves on the James H. Shortridge Donation Land Claim: The first Mrs. Phillip Numbers, daughter Mrs. Albert Howard and infant son.

Oregon Historical Records shows

that Philip was present for the 1857, 1858 and 1859 Provisional and Territorial

Census. But after Catherine's death, Philip left his two young girls with relatives in Douglas County and spent some time on the Powder River in Baker County.

History of that area tells us that gold was discovered in 1861 and a gold rush ensued. Within a few months, it became apparent that lumber was needed and mills started sprouting up.

It's believed that Philip may have worked in one of those mills and then came home with the thought to make his living in mill work.

The 1887, Lane County census shows Philip Numbers, age 46, a farmer, living with his youngest daughter, Melvina, age 15, who is keeping house.

His oldest daughter Nancy had married Albert Howard September 25, 1869.

Miss Taylor in her "Pioneer Footprints" article tells us that Philip Numbers went into the sawmill business in 1870, but there is no proof of that until Philip purchased the mill built by William Payne in 1872.

The Numbers Mill was between London Springs Road and the Coast Fork of the Willamette River just South of Charles Gilham property in the 1954 Metzger Map.

About one mile north of the James Parrish Donation Land Claim and half-mile south of Cottage Grove Reservoir.

On the 18th of March in 1872, Orin Howard, a brother to Albert, married Sarah M. Numbers (over 17) at the home of Philip Numbers.

Just over a year later, on December 31, 1873, Philip married for a second time to Clarissa (Clara) Lackey, in Douglas County.

The first day of June 1879, the Numbers Mill was one of very few local

mills to be documented on the Special Schedule of Manufacturers – Lumber and Saw Mills.

This census is very interesting, asking for the number of people employed and their ages, the number of hours in an ordinary day, wages, months in operation, the kind of saws they use, value of logs and materials and the kind of power used.

The 1880 Population census shows Philip Numbers, age 57, tending a sawmill, his wife Clarissa, age 40, keeping house, and his step-children, Emeline age 16, Robert age 14, Frank age 9 and Harriet age 8.

About 1889-90, Philip's mill was leased to A. Croall.

Over the next ten years there are several mentions of Mr. Numbers in the local newspaper. On July 9, 1881, his home was slightly damaged by fire and in October of 1885 the case of EW Wipple & Bros vs. Philip Numbers ensued to recover money ("Golden Was the Past, 1850 – 1970", page 17, mentions that EW Wipple operated early grocery stores).

And in July of 1889 Philip Numbers, "one of the old pioneers of '54," made a pleasant trip to the newspapers office.

But one of the more interesting articles was written by Miss Taylor for *The Sentinel's* "Pioneer Footprints".

Because Philip Numbers' family left Illinois to go back to Ohio just before he was married and came west, he had not seen any of his family since then and was presumed dead.

An Ohio paper dated January 1901 ran the following headline: "Mourned as Dead for Nearly Half a Century – A Romance in Real Life – Brothers Separated in Youth Located Each Other When Both Are Old Men – One in Oregon, the Other in Ohio."

To make a long-complicated story shorter, a nephew of Philips saw the medical sign of a nephew of one of Philip's brothers, living in Idaho.

Because of the unusual surname, they talked and discovered they were related.

The nephews were then able to get the two brothers back together for a visit.

In the June 1900 census for Lane County, Philip, age 76 and Clara, age 58 are living with Robert Lackey, his step-son.

Philip died March 23, 1903, at the age of 80. He is buried at Taylor-Lane Cemetery.

His wife Clara died April 9, 1925, at the age of 80 at the home of her son Robert Lackey. She is also buried at Taylor-Lane Cemetery.

Years later, descendants of Philip, living in his old house, discovered the "Lackey Family Ghost". Philip considered himself a "spiritualist" and promised he would come back after he died if he could and let them all know he was okay.

Marie Geer writes in her book, "Four Score Years in Oregon": "Dad woke to hear the yard gate creak as it always did when opened and closed. Soon he heard the front door open and close, then slow, shuffling footsteps making the old stairs creak. Knowing the family was all in bed, Dad raised up to try to see who was coming. He was completely baffled to see no one; yet the footsteps continued into the bedroom. Then mom spoke to Dad, 'Don't worry. It's just granddad going to his room. We've heard him many times.'"

The family was never afraid, because Philip was "one of the gentlest men on earth. He wouldn't have hurt us!"

Philip and Catherine had two daughters, Nancy and Sarah Melvina.

Nancy married Albert Howard from Benton County. The 1870 Starr's Point, Benton County census shows Albert as head of household, Nancy as his wife, and Albert's mother and siblings living in the home too.

Nancy died after August 5, 1870, possibly in childbirth, and is buried on the James H. Shortridge Donation Land Claim along with her infant son.

According to her sister, Nancy also left behind a little girl, Frances, born about 1871.

Frances married Cecil E Robertson in Benton County, Oregon May 29, 1888 but records show that she was divorced before the 1920 Multnomah census.

Sarah Melvina married Oren Howard, a brother of Albert.

She and her husband lived on a portion of the Donation Land Claim for 30 years and raised five children, Frank M., Ernest, Amy, Lillie and Lena.

Two additional children died in infancy.

About 1905, she purchased a small home in Roseburg where her failing health improved.

Records show that in 1907 she and Oren divorced. In 1921, she moved to Coburg where she passed away in 1935.

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SLCFR issues fire danger warning

On June 30, South Lane County Fire and Rescue set the fire danger level at 'high.'

High fire danger level restricts mowing of dead and cured grass to before 10 a.m. and after 8 p.m. It also

places restrictions on smoking, open fires, power saw usage, working with metal, operation of motorized vehicles, bans use of all illegal fireworks, and restricts where the use of legal fire-

works can be used.

Go to South Lane County Fire and Rescue's website at southlanefire.org to view all the restrictions in place due to the High Fire Danger designation.

10TH ANNUAL ELEMENTARY TRIATHLON
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- \$5 per child after July 26th

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