

Descendent of early Vernonia shopkeeper brings history full circle

By Rebecca McGaugh

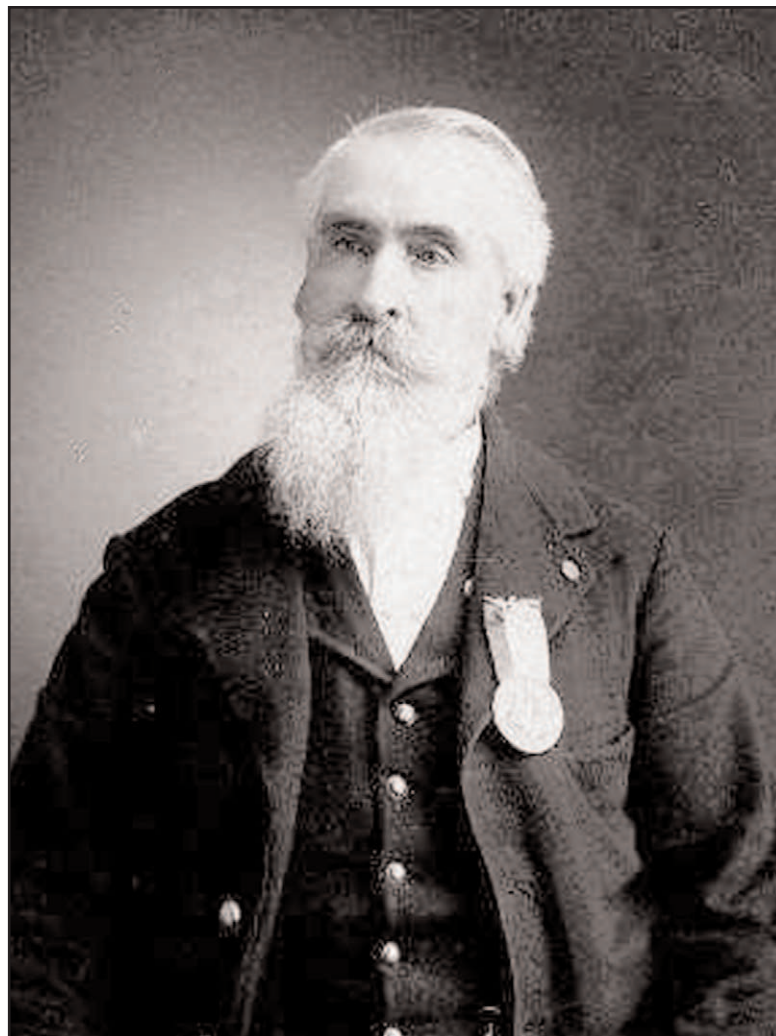
Robert William McNutt, a storekeeper in Vernonia in 1887, was born April 28, 1836, in Springhill, Cumberland Co., Nova Scotia, Canada. He died March 2, 1915, in Cornelius and is buried alongside his wife, Martha, in the Cornelius Methodist Cemetery. In between his birth and his death, McNutt lived in Illinois, then Minnesota, came to Oregon in 1857, was back in Minnesota in 1859, where he married Martha Jane Foster, served in Company E, 9th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry from 1862 to 1865, was listed as a school teacher in Washington County in the 1870 census and as a Dry Goods Merchant in Washington County in the 1880 census.

In 1887, McNutt built his third store in Vernonia on the west bank of Rock Creek. It doesn't appear, however, that McNutt ever actually lived in Vernonia as he still had stores in Cornelius and Chehalem Valley.

McNutt's father, William Henry McNutt, platted Dakota City, Minn. in 1856, though no homesite was ever sold due to an economic downturn. But that may have been where Robert McNutt learned to plat towns. McNutt and Martha sat down with Joseph Van Blaricom and platted the north half of the southwest quarter of TN4 R4W on June 27, 1888, creating the first 18 blocks of Vernonia.

On June 23, 2006, David Scott Helmer, along with his fiancé, Catherine, and son, Austin, moved to Vernonia, bringing history full circle.

Here is the connection: Robert W. McNutt's second son, Elmer (born February 11, 1861), married Clarisee Loe Aft after June 4, 1880. Their second son was Wilbur Lloyd McNutt (born December 3, 1891,



in Cornelius, died May 9, 1960 in Portland). Wilbur married Adeline Elizabeth "Bessie" Eberly (born January 13, 1890 in Nebraska, died April 11, 1971 in Forest Grove). Wilbur and Bessie's second daughter was Virginia Lloydell "Mickey" McNutt (born June 24, 1923 in Forest Grove). Mickey married Calvin Carl Davis on September 29, 1945, in Vernonia where the two of them owned a restaurant before moving to Tillamook.

Calvin Carl Davis was born in Vernonia on September 28, 1923, to Carl Armstead Davis and Nellie Faye (Riley) Davis, who had moved to Vernonia in 1922. The Davis' lived "kitty-corner" from the only store in Vernonia before moving to a farm out on Stoney Point Road,

and eventually moving to 955 Grant, Vernonia. Carl helped clear the land where the O-A Mill was built and worked there from the time it opened until it closed. He died in 1963. Nellie died in 1989.

Mickey and Calvin Davis had



Left, Robert W. McNutt. Above, Russell Davis and David Scott Helmer, both descendants of Robert W. McNutt, who along with Joseph Van Blaricom, platted eight blocks of Vernonia in 1888.

two children, Russell (the source of most of this history) and Carla Davis. The kids were raised in Tillamook, after their parents left Vernonia in 1950. Carla married William Helmer and their child, David Scott Helmer, remembers coming to visit his great-grandmother, Nellie Davis, as a young boy. David has the same memories most children have of growing up in Vernonia, he remembers swimming in Rock Creek, picking apples, and seeing movies at the Joy Theater.

Now that David Scott Helmer

lives in Vernonia, the McNutt and Davis families are somehow alive in Vernonia once again. Helmer wonders if his current home, near Rock Creek, might not even be near the spot where Robert W. McNutt and Joseph Van Blaricom sat when they were working on platting Vernonia.

Anyone with additional information on descendants or relatives of Robert W. McNutt with a Vernonia connection, please contact Rebecca McGaugh at The Independent, 503-429-9410.

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