

Pioneer William Benitz

259
B. Endigen Germany

In the year 1834 a young man aged 19 years having finished his education at "Heidelberg University" decided to leave Germany, not liking the political situation.

He set sail on an old vessel for Mexico.

The journey was long and dreary, when getting to the gulf of Mexico and land in sight, a dreadful storm arose, and after pitching & tossing the ship broke up.

He watched many passengers drown, but as he studied the waves and saw bits of timber washed ashore on the 7th wave, he decided to jump on the next 7th wave, which landed him on the beach. (He was the only survivor)

He was exhausted and slept on the sand for many hours.

On waking, he saw he was surrounded by hostile footling Indians, however they realized he was harmless and took him off where he lived with them and worked for many months.

Mexico at that time was in a sorry state, and when opportunity arose William escaped and was able to join the Texas Rangers. He fought through the war under General Sutter and eventually became Captain.

He helped hoist the Bear Flag (in 1846?) Being an able man and a good soldier, he was granted Fort Ross by Sutter and given the job of keeping the bad Indians at bay.

He made a lot of money selling potatoes to the gold miners, and proved himself so well, that "Fort Ross" was given to him as a home in payment for his service. There is much as to the Russian river that I do not know.

In 1845 the Kolmer family arrived (Gulf mesicio)
 Mrs Kolmer was one of the first white women
 to land. The family crossed mountains and
 took six months by covered wagon to get
 to Fort Ross. Their home was Timber Cove
 Josephine Kolmer a daughter was two years
 old when she crossed ^{to the states} with her parents.
 At the age of 18 she married William Benitz.
 Seven children were born to them. Six boys
 and one girl.

Their first child was smothered by an Indian girl
 who got tired of footing after him. The girl
 was flogged by her tribe and banished.
 When out riding one day later Mrs Benitz
 was chased by bad Indians, and shot at
 with poisoned arrows, she was unhurt.

The 2nd child while sleeping ⁱⁿ his basket
 was found to be covered by a rattle snake.
 With great quietness and calm, William
 placed a bowl of milk in the basket.
 The snake uncoiled and slid to the ground,
 which enabled William to tell it having
 done no harm ^{to} the baby.

William & Josephine's children all went to school
 in Cataland (the only English school)

The Benitz also bought a house there,
 William was a great reader and very learned.
 He had sold Fort Ross in 1867 to James Dixon
 of Marin County.

Having plenty of money and also the
 "Wanderlust" to see the world, he decided to
 go to the Argentine (1874)

He set sail with his family to England
 and thence to the Argentine.

William had always promised his wife
 a trip to Germany, however when on
 landing at Southampton, he found there
 was a ship sailing in two hours time
 to the Argentine, so they just stepped
 from one ship to another and Mrs Benitz
 never saw her native country again.

William was a hard man in many ways and she was gentle in those days, but he was fond of her and proud of his children. The trip to Rosario Argentina was very long when they arrived he bought a house and within a week he placed his two youngest sons at school.

He then went off with his two elder boys in search of land. He bought land at Las Rosas and also in the Chaco his 'estancia' at Las Rosas is 'ha California' where he built a house, but shortly after that he died.

His wife then took over and was most capable, she had to cope with very headstrong sons, and a daughter of whom she was not very fond.

William took over ha California
Alfred " Los Palmares (Chaco)

Josephine married Alfred Schreiber and was happy for almost the first time in her life

Charles was drowned in Mar del Plata 1877

Herman died in the Chaco

John Mrs Beniz's favourite son bought 4 leagues of land 'ha Algarrobo' which he fenced and put in cattle, sheep, pigs etc. with his earnings, obtained from footing after two neighbouring 'estancias', belonging to great friends.

John married Marjory Macintosh a young girl out there from Scotland.

They had a lovely home at ha Algarrobo which was built in 1901.

Their children

Elsie, Josephine, Marjory, John, (my husband) and Alfred.

Details and knowledge as to Fort Ross, I gained from my mother-in-law who in her turn, had these details, and many letters and photos from her mother-in-law Mrs William Benitz (née Kobner)

I have the original key to the Russian church and also the first key to the house in the strade signed (Aphra Benitz)

The 1st local steam railway was opened in 1855 Howe was the chief engineer. He married the ~~youngest~~ youngest Kobner daughter.

I have the 1st photograph of the railway.