

Idahoan Legacy Roots: The Coski, Scott, & Blackwell Families

I am the great-grandson of three pioneer Long Valley families: Coski, Scott, and Blackwell. I want to tell you about these families; not their families' origins back in the time of the Revolution or before---but where my great-grandparents came from and when they came to the Valley.

The Coski Family



The Coski Family

John & Antonia (Knitter) Coski

their sons, Paul, Frank, & Louis (c. 1888)

Johann Adlebert von Kukowski was born April 18, 1854 in Dziemian, West Prussia to Franz von Kukowski, an estate owner, and Victoria von Czapiewski. The "von" in their names meant that both of these families were members of the nobility but that did not mean rich, it simply meant that they were perhaps better off than many in the Lippusch parish. According to the 1900 U.S. Census, Johann immigrated to the United States in 1869 and the first record of him here shows his name as John Coski (with a "C" but often spelled with a "K"). We don't have documentation where he entered the U.S but family lore says that he was starving in New York so he sold his "title"---the von---for a bowl of soup. According to Don Coski's memoir, Don's father, Dave, said his dad spoke six languages. Don quotes his father that John was alone and destitute in New York City when a shoe cobbler took John in and taught him the trade. This is quite likely as John was a harness maker and, according to the 1912-1913 Idaho Gazetteer, he is

listed as a shoemaker and later as a saddle maker in Glenns Ferry. His Declaration for Citizenship was made in 1875 in Winona, Minnesota. He became a naturalized citizen in 1901 in Washington County, Idaho.



Image of David Coski

After the citizenship declaration of 1875, the next record of him is in Chicago where he married Antonia Knitter, November 28, 1877. She also was from Prussia and had immigrated to the U.S. in 1870 with her parents and siblings. They lived in Chicago, and at least three children were born there: Louie, Frank, and Paul. Travelling west to Nebraska,

The Scott Family



David Garrett Scott was born in Westchester, Pennsylvania in 1851. In 1868, he moved with his parents and siblings to Putnam County, Missouri where he married Ann Jane Reece in 1875. They had four children while living in Missouri: Burt, Al, Elmer, and Cora. They moved to Kansas for a few years and Ollie and Gilbert Kimble (G. K. or Kay) were born there. Returning to Missouri, Effie and Asa were born in Benton County. Ann Jane (Angie), David's wife, died in 1889, just two weeks after Ace's birth.

In 1891, D. G. married Cynthia Anna Leeper, and to this union two children were born, Elizabeth and Leonard. In the fall of 1903, Garrett went to North Idaho to visit a cousin and then came down to Long Valley. At that time he bought a 400 acre farm with a "good house" from Jessie Davis, an ex-dance hall girl in Alaska and the young wife of a Klondike gold miner who came here from Alaska a couple of years earlier. The miner had purchased the farm from the original homesteaders by the name of Campbell. Mr. Davis didn't like farming so he deeded the ranch to Jessie and he went back to Alaska. She sold the ranch "cheap for cash" (\$3,000) and moved to San Francisco. This ranch was near the old town of Center where the Gestrin ranch is today.



The evening of March 6, 1904, David Garrett Scott and family arrived at the end of the Oregon Short Line Railroad in Meridian. The snow was so deep that year they couldn't get their wagons over the roads to Long Valley until June but Burt and G.K. (Kay) went up by horseback to scout around. Later they both took out homesteads north of present-day Lake Fork as did their cousin, George H. Scott and, south of Center, brother-in-law George Fields. Their sister Effie bought four lots in the original town site of Roseberry in 1909 for the sum of ten dollars. J. O. Scott, Garrett's nephew, also filed homesteads. J. O. was postmaster at Center from 1908 until it was discontinued in 1910. Later he was manager of the Long Valley/Roseberry phone company. As you can see, there were many Scotts in Long Valley in the early days with some descendants still here. Burt's grandson is Bob Scott and George's grandson is Claude Fields, both of Cascade. And of course my Mom, Eilene Evans and I think there are some great-grandchildren of J. O.



Kay Scott & Roseberry General Store (c. 1912)

D. G. became a partner in the Roseberry General Store in 1908 when he bought out James Winkler's interest. The store was renamed McDougal and Scott but at some point they ended their partnership and Garrett established another store, Scott and Son just down the street. Garrett bought the Tom Reedy place in 1912. The house was situated on the west end of Heinrich Lane down under the hill next to the Payette River at what was known as the Scott ford. Asa Scott and his wife Myrtle lived there for four years beginning in 1912. When Effie Scott and Ed Mayer married in 1916 they then operated the ranch until moving to Emmett in 1921. That was a financial panic year with wheat only worth 10 cents a bushel and it was being burned in Boise for heat as it was cheaper than coal. The year before, Cousin Joe Bennett rented 40 acres, raised wheat and sold it for \$5,000, the most money he was to see for many years.

Before the railroad arrived at McCall in 1914, G. K. Scott and his brother, Burt, did some freighting to the Boise valley. Going down, hauling rough lumber and sacks of oats (for horse feed) took three days. Coming back, uphill, hauling salt, sugar, coffee, nails, and various supplies, took 6 days.

Because of poor health, Garrett Scott moved to Emmett in 1915 with his wife and two children, Elizabeth and Leonard. He died there just six months later, in January, 1916.



G. K. and Elizabeth G. (Coski) Scott's Wedding Photograph (1912)

Elizabeth G. Coski graduated Albion Normal School in 1911 and taught one year at Norwood prior to her marriage to G. K. Scott September, 1912. Their first daughter, Helen-Kay, was born in 1913 followed by Eilene in 1914. Kay operated the Scott and Son store in Roseberry until moving it to Donnelly in 1919. Kay had a sister Elizabeth and several cousins with that name so he called his wife Gertrude. She died in 1923 at the age of 30. He was elected Valley County Commissioner the year before, a post he held for four years. In 1925, he married Elsie McDonald and, after selling the store in Donnelly, farmed again until moving to Portland for his health. They were there for nearly a year but returned to Long Valley where he served as game warden. In 1932 he was elected County Assessor, an office he held until his death in September 1946. (County commissioner, game warden, assessor---he was a glutton for punishment.)

Helen-Kay was raised in the Valley, attended St. Theresa's in Boise and graduated Donnelly High School. She attended the College of Idaho for two years but suspended her studies when she married Frank Kreizenbeck although years later she completed her bachelor's degree at Idaho State University. Frank's employment with the Forest Service resulted in many moves in Idaho and Utah but with a career change they wound up first in Pocatello and then in Boise where they lived the remainder of their lives. They

had two sons, Mack, who lives in Meridian, and Greg, who lives in Arizona. Helen-Kay passed away this past December (2009) at the age of 96.

Eilene married Arnold Amen at a very young age and had a son, Robert, aka Bobby K. That marriage didn't last long and she returned home. Her parents raised her son while she continued her education, and they subsequently adopted him. Recognized as the "Faaaantastic Scotte," he is well-known in Cascade today.

Even though it was the depth of the Depression, Eilene was able to attend Lewiston State Normal School because of her mother's life insurance policy. She earned her two-year diploma in 1935, and in 1937, her life certificate. In the school year 1938-39, she taught at the Whitney-Fairbrother school earning an annual salary of \$675 plus housing. (This is the school that has been moved to Roseberry as part of the museum complex.) In addition to teaching all eight grades, she was required to do the janitorial work, split and carry wood, carry water, do the floors and blackboards. On Fridays after school she would ski out (in the winter of course) to Lake Fork where her father would meet her and take her home to Cascade. Sunday afternoon the trip was reversed. Classes over many years resulted in her award of the baccalaureate degree from Idaho State University in 1963. In addition to the Whitney-Fairbrother school, Eilene taught at Ketchum, Roseberry, MacGregor, Yellow Pine, High Valley, Indian Springs, Nevada, Emmett - Wardwell in town and Central Mesa in the country, and her last school - Cascade.

In August of 1939, she married George Blackwell, Jr. of McCall. This marriage produced David Blackwell (that would be me) and they were later divorced. In 1947, she married Ivan Evans and gained two step-children, Jerry and Jean. Ivan worked many years for Hallock & Howard which became Boise-Payette Lumber Company which later became Boise-Cascade. He died in 1988 after 41 years of marriage. Eilene continues to live in Cascade in the house she has lived in since her marriage to Ivan and where she celebrated her 96th birthday ten days ago.

The Blackwell Family



The Blackwell Family
Clem, Fannie, Herman and George

There were three Clements so this might be a bit confusing. Clement Washington Blackwell, my great-grandfather, was born in Arkansas in 1863, the 12th of 15 children. His father was Clement Cude Blackwell and his mother Jane "Jennie" Morris who was half Cherokee. In 1875, when Clem was 12 years old, the family made plans to move to Oregon and they headed north to Independence, Missouri. During the formation of a full wagon train there, the senior Clement was elected captain of some 50 wagons. In April, according to Clement's very brief account, they "started across the plains with teams," bound for Oregon and that "the journey was consummated without accident or incident." From the time of the death of Clement's and Jennie's twins in infancy in 1849 more than 50 years elapsed before the next death in the immediate family, rather remarkable considering the hazardous trip to Oregon and lack of health care in the 19th century. Where the Oregon Trail crossed the Snake River at Three Mile Crossing, the current site of Glens Ferry, the Blackwells' son, Sam, left the wagon train with a sack of flour and a few supplies to make his own way. He became a prosperous cattle rancher and his descendants still live in the Glens Ferry area.

The family's first winter in Oregon was spent in Fox Valley, north of John Day, where they nearly starved. In 1877, Clement established a homestead in Long Creek, a ranch that still remains in the family. During the Indian troubles of 1877-78, the Long Creek settlers hastily constructed a log fort that they took refuge in when bands of marauding Indians came through the area. The Blackwell ranch was attacked on July 2 and the

livestock was killed or driven off and buildings were burned. In 1883, Clement W. Blackwell married Frances Lenora Shields, the daughter of a Union veteran of the Civil War who had also made the 1875 journey on the Trail. In 1900 Clem, Fannie, and their two sons - Herman and George - moved to Walla Walla, Washington and then in 1902 came to Meadows, Idaho. They sold meat and milk to the miners at Warren and operated the 12 Mile House on the Warren road at Secesh meadows. In 1905, The Blackwell family moved to McCall. Clem began a successful acquisition of businesses including a hotel, livery stable, saloon, butcher shop, cattle ranch and part interest in the McCall sawmill. Although Clem engaged in these business interests, cattle and sheep ranching were his primary pursuits.

August 1, 1907 ". . . the new sawmill began running with the first bill of lumber for C. W. Blackwell who intends to build a nine room residence," according to the *Long Valley Advocate*. McCall's first sawn lumber house was completed before the end of that year. Not long after, Clem bought the York homestead, east of the present golf course which he owned until about 1945. Folks had used long wooden skis as a method of transportation through the lengthy winters for many years but skiing as a sport probably began with the jumping competitions on Blackwell Hill at that ranch. According to Johnny Shaw in the *Star-News* in 1984, skiing ". . . was the attraction in the old days. They'd take everyone out with a team and sled and jump all day." Interest in skiing outgrew the Blackwell Hill and competition was moved in the 1930's out to what is now the present site of the Little Ski Hill on land owned by Carl Brown.

The Payette Lake Star in January, 1918 reported that they had received a letter from C. W. Blackwell stating ". . . he and the boys are feeding 450 head of cattle in Ontario now--or rather the boys are feeding them and Clem is telling about it. They started in the winter with 750 head. Mr. Blackwell states the last 115 sold brought \$130 a head net and that hay has dropped from \$15 to \$11 & \$13." Later that year the paper reported that "C. W. Blackwell bought the Arnold Mickels ranch of 280 acres at Roseberry. . . . He was already the owner of three fine ranches in the valley and this purchase makes him the biggest farmer in Valley County." Fannie died in 1928 as the result of a farming accident. Both of their sons, Herman and George, drove stage, ranched and, in later years, each had a dairy. George married Rosa Cowan in 1911, riding horseback from McCall to the county seat in Idaho City for a marriage license. Following his kid brother, the next year, Herman married Rocena Riggs in 1912. With two Roses in the family, Herman's blond Rose was known as 'Rose White' and George's Rose was 'Rose Red' for her red hair.

George and Herman bought and ran two bands of sheep, summering them at McCall and bringing them to winter at Weiser and Vale in the Willow Creek area. They bought them in 1929 for \$15 a head ... when they sold out ... \$6 a head. At the winter feed grounds, they lived in tents and Rose cared for the baby lambs, cooked for the crews, and milked a few cows to feed the baby lambs with. They went out of the sheep business in 1935. George did many things to make a living during those Depression years. He drove mail stage from McCall to Warren, then went to work for Idaho Laundry as well as running stock on the ranch. In 1947, they moved to Vale, Oregon where they bought an oil business which George operated for several years.



Image of Rose, George, George Jr. Blackwell ca. 1914

Herman and Rose had two children, little Clem who died at age 8 in 1921, and Marie Strode who still lives in McCall at the age of 91. George and Rose also had two children, George, Jr. my dad, who died in 1997 at 84, and Jim who is 89 and lives in Boulder City, Nevada. In 1938, a new member was added to their family when an eight-year-old boy whose mother was a dear friend of theirs passed away and the Blackwell family took Jack Hubbard to be their son and brother. Jack and his wife Delores have a place in Donnelly.

To better understand life in the early days of Long Valley, I read the issues of the *Long Valley Advocate* from 1904 to 1907 and the few that exist of the *Van Wyck Times* for 1907 and 1908 plus a couple of years of the *Payette Lake Star* in 1918-1919. Ranching and farming was hard and difficult work but I was impressed with the neighborliness that was reported in the press. People seemed to visit back and forth quite a bit for two and three days at a time. Surprise parties were not uncommon. A literary society was formed in 1905 at the Star School and a minstrel show came to town. Dances and basket suppers and masked balls were popular but perhaps the biggest event was the "Grand Celebration of Independence Day" with parades, orations, songs, races---both foot and horse---with cash prizes, declamation contests, and, of course, fireworks. Competitions among the fair lasses of the valley towns for the title of Goddess of Liberty were spirited at 5 cents the vote.

These thumbnail sketches of three quite different families typify the pioneers who settled the west and could be the same stories or similar ones of everyone here. The hardships and deprivations they experienced are almost beyond the imagination of today but all the pioneers and early settlers deserve our admiration and respect.



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