

Early pioneers: the Shertenlibs

By Sherry Stewart



If you are reading this, it must be because you find the stories of our pioneer settlers interesting. Each month I talk to their children and grandchildren, and write something of their family history, because I see that these colourful people and their sometimes astounding achievements are being forgotten so quickly. Their lives, our lives, will all be forgotten soon enough. It is my wish to honour their living and loving and to keep it alive for at least one more generation.

Margaret Sharon, editor of the South Cariboo Genealogy Group Newsletter, recently reminded me of this by giving me a wonderful collection of articles by Ian MacInnes entitled "Cariboo Memories." Ian, who lives in Duncan, is a member of the Shertenlib family, the Roe Lake settlers who gave Shertenlib Road its name, and we will be publishing much of what he has written in the months to come. One of Margaret's newsletters also carried an overview of this old time family entitled "The Shertenlib Story." So what better place to start our look at the Shertenlibs than by sharing this with you. It is written by Norma Vaughan, a granddaughter of the original Shertenlib settlers and sister of long time Bridge Lake resident, Russell Ross.

What's in a Name? The Shertenlib Story

By Norma Vaughan (1933 - 2006)

It was in the early fall of 1918 when Fred and Susanna Shertenlib started to gather their personal effects, as well as their brood, readying for a long, difficult trip from Oroville, Washington, to the Cariboo. Among the more important



Susanna (Granny) Shertenlib
was born in Wales



Frederick Gottlieb Shertenlib
was born in Berne, Switzerland

items were two covered wagons with a four-horse team for each.

After packing the wagons they started out for Osoyoos where they planned to cross the border into BC. The lead wagon was occupied by Fred and Susanna. The second wagon carried four of their seven children: Arvilla, who was 20 years of age; Verna, who was 13 and who in later years became my mother; Edna, 10 years old; and Goldi, 7, being the baby of the family. [Editor's Note: Goldi was Ian's mother]

The eldest daughter, Gladys, was employed as a cook in a hospital in Oroville and remained there for some time, but she too answered the call of the Cariboo and soon followed her family. Nettie was married and had moved to Spokane, Washington. Alice, another daughter, had married Gordon King, and with baby Jack had already travelled north to make their home in the Cariboo. They had in their care Ernie, who was about 16 and the only son in the Shertenlib family.

When they reached Osoyoos, much to their disappointment and

dismay, Fred and Susanna were told that one of their horses was diseased and would have to be done away with. This meant returning to Oroville where Fred,



Russell Ross, already tall in the saddle, with the old Shertenlib barn behind him (probably taken in the spring of 1931).

a blacksmith, would have to work another year to earn enough money to buy another horse. Fred worked the year and bought a black mare named Queenie. Queenie, who was a former milk wagon horse, had a habit of sitting down in harness while waiting for the milkman to make his rounds. This proved very beneficial when the brake failed on the wagon that the girls were driving, and Queenie sat down and stopped the wagon from plunging into the canyon not far from the spot known as Jackass Mountain.

After overcoming many obstacles and drawbacks, the family once again reached Osoyoos in the fall of 1920. This time all was in order and they were allowed to cross the border and proceed northward. Arriving in the Cariboo after about two months travelling, the family lived in one or two places around the Roe Lake and Bridge Lake areas. They eventually decided to plant their roots at the spot near the stream [Bridge Creek] where the Rocking R Ranch has its gate. They lived there for many years.

There is no remaining evidence to indicate anyone ever lived there except for the name of the road—Shertenlib Road—named for my grandparents, Fred and Susanna Shertenlib.

— Norma's story ends here —

Fred and Susanna's grandson Russell Ross remembers that the original Shertenlib farm house and barn were right opposite the bridge where Shertenlib road crosses Bridge Creek. Coming from Highway #24 toward Judson Road, the old barn was situated on the left side of the road just before the driveway to the Rocking R. The Shertenlib cabin was also on the left just past the driveway, nestled into the bank very near the creek.

After moving to Roe Lake, Fred continued to shoe horses for the locals as well as working his own land and haying for others. The logging business was starting up, and there were always plenty of horses to shoe. He was also skilled at welding, sharpening tools, and repairing machinery. In 1929, at the age



Norma Ross Vaughn sits in front of the Shertenlib cabin which stood just by the bridge on Shertenlib Road. The windows are covered over because the house was not being lived in at the time.

of 61, he became very ill and the family took him to Lone Butte with the idea of putting him on a train for Williams Lake and the hospital there. Unfortunately he died at the PGE depot before the train arrived, and he was buried at the Lone Butte Cemetery.

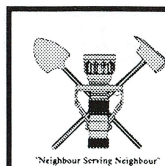
"Granny Shertenlib was blind," Russell Ross told me. "But she managed pretty well. I grew up with it, so at the time I just thought that was the norm. She washed clothes, in a tub set on two chairs, with a scrub board. I remember her stoking wood into the kitchen range by touch and sound. She cooked too, by taste and smell. Quite a woman."

Helen Horn remembers Susanna fondly. "I knew Granny Shertenlib," Helen says, "and she was quite amazing. A woman with no sight, but her daughters and my Mum (Bertha Granberg) and us little kids used to go picking berries, and we'd set her in the middle of a berry patch and she picked the berries. Especially during berry picking time we visited with them

a lot. When my dad was away, and he was away often, my mum would go and visit with Granny once her chores were done and the children were looked after. Back then it would be over a two-mile walk to their place. Granny had her kitchen, a country kitchen in those years, with a wood stove, and she cooked in that kitchen. She baked bread and all kinds of things."

After Fred passed away, except for Ernest, it was a household of women. Gladys, who was the oldest, was like a mother to the younger children. Then came Nettie, then Alice (who married Gordon King). Next came Arvilla, then Ernest, Viola, Edna and lastly Goldi.

Granny Shertenlib was known as a remarkable lady, and to add to her attributes, she apparently had a 'beautiful Welsh singing voice' and used to sing when Gordon King would play the piano. She died in 1943 at the age of 66, and is buried in the Roe Lake cemetery.



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