

Nancy Six McCormick Green

The first emigrate family in Auburn? Sheriff John Boggs recalled in his articles about early Auburn that when he arrived in 1849, there were only two women in town, Mrs. Elliott and Mrs. McCormick. Here is Nancy McCormick's story.

Nancy Six was born in 1819 in Ohio County, Kentucky. At age 17 Nancy married John McCormick, a tanner by trade. John was 26 years old. Between 1838 and 1847 they had 5 children.



Nancy McCormick

In 1849 Nancy and John caught the "Gold Fever" and packed up the 5 children and headed for California. They traveled with about 20 of their relatives and neighbors including John Bigler who would become the third Governor of California.

John brought a supply of boots and shoes, several wagons, and a few hired men. Besides their ox teams they brought horses and milk cows. For the time, it was probably a fairly easy journey for Nancy. The hired men would likely have done many of the chores that less affluent women would have done themselves, like wood gathering, fire building, milking cows, driving the ox teams, etc.

They arrived in Sacramento in September 1849. They re-stocked with supplies and headed immediately to Auburn where John built a cabin and opened a store to sell the boots and shoes they brought across the plains.

The winter of 1849-1850 was an extremely wet year with torrential rains and much flooding. In December of 1849 John set out for Sacramento and never returned. It was assumed that he and his team were caught up in the flooding of the American River and were literally washed away.

Nancy, faced with the prospect of providing for her large family, needed to act quickly and she did. She sold the store John had started and bought a hotel. Her great, great, granddaughter stated: "I imagine she was doing what she did best – keeping house, a big house."

Nancy obtained one of the basics for a Gold Rush hotel, a liquor license. Her hotel was a log and frame house on the corner of Main and Commercial Street – now the site of Marybelle’s restaurant.

Keeping a hotel and feeding scores of hard scrabble miners was a daunting and exhausting job, by August of 1851, Nancy had had enough and sold the hotel to Solomon Folk. It is interesting to note that Nancy who was running a business signed the legal document with a “mark” not a signature.

She remarried in 1852 to Hiram Green a wheelwright and wagon maker. Hiram was 28 and Nancy was 33. They married in Nicolaus.

Nancy had filed a probate over John’s estate in 1852, in fact, Placer County Probate #1. In 1853 she relinquished her duties to Hiram. From the probate records we find a number of interesting facts. John left a fairly substantial estate. The probate lists 11 head of horses, 12 head of Mexican cattle, 25 head of Spanish cattle, 19 hogs, wagons, harness, farming utensils, household furniture and 160 acres of land in the Dry Creek area.

As evidenced by their marriage in Nicolaus, Hiram and Nancy had some connection to that area, as they were boarding the older children there in 1853-54. In 1854 a fire demolished their farm in Dry Creek and they left the Auburn area. In the 1860’s, there are two more children born.

In the 1870’s they are in Shasta County and in the 1880’s they are in Tehama County. By 1900 Nancy was living in Shasta County with one of her daughters and Hiram was living in Glenn County with his son.

Nancy died in 1906 at the age of 87 in Shasta County, Hiram’s whereabouts at his death are unknown.

It is possible that Nancy and John and the 5 children who trekked across the plains, the desert and the mountains early in the Gold Rush period were the first emigrant family to settle in the bustling mining camp of Auburn. If not, we still have a story of a frontier woman with the stamina and fortitude to take care of her children and herself in the rough and tumble world of early California.

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