

OCGS REFERENCE ONLY

Wohlfert Family

# Heir's A Parent

## THE LAST OF THE WOHLFERT NAME IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

By Doris Wohlfert Betts

### JOHN GEORGE WOHLFERT

John George Wohlfert, was born February 26, 1825 in Germany. Where in Germany is unknown. Why he came to the United States is not known. He immigrated to New York in July of 1848, and was naturalized in Shasta County, California, October 22, 1856 in the District Court. He was known here as George Wohlfert. He was a blacksmith by trade and settled in South Fork Township of the Salmon River region in Klamath County, (later renamed Shasta - Trinity and now Siskiyou County). He was one of the first settlers in this remote area. Others who settled in this area were William Buell, George Green Brown and Francis Abrams. These men and others like them had to be brave and bold with strong constitutions to withstand the severe winters and rugged terrain. It was truly "survival of the fittest". They established homes, mines, farms and towns out of these wild mountains filled with gold.

George Wohlfert settled on the original William Buell place on Rush Creek on the South Fork of Salmon River. This ranch changed hands many times. It appears George purchased this 100 acres of land for \$1000, June 17<sup>th</sup> 1864. It included a blacksmith shop with all tools, water ditches, etc.

George was blacksmith to horses and mules which were the only means of transportation because the trails were so narrow and steep. He also mined for gold, and had farms in Summerville and Petersburg. He had orchards and gardens at both places.

At Petersburg, George Wohlfert married Christiana George in 1873. He was 48 years old and she was 16. She was the daughter of William Henry George, formerly from Cornwall. Her father was a farmer on the East Fork of Salmon River.

George and Christiana had one son while living in Petersburg, William Frederick, born November 23, 1874. They called him "Willie". Later, the family moved to the East Fork property at Brownsville. George also bought a ranch at Spring Gulch, still known as "Wohlfert's Point." He raised hay on the point and potatoes in the valley below. This ranch was located between the George ranch and Cecilville.

Christiana Wohlfert apparently couldn't get along with her husband and soon divorced him, taking Willie with her. Old country dutchman were notoriously hard-working, stubborn and hide-bound set in their ways. If her husband was typical, it's little wonder a very young wife of different national culture could not live with him. Although these men were honest, thrifty and friendly, they often were tyrants to their own families.

George continued farming at Spring Gulch and could have been nicknamed "Appleseed Wohlfert" for his love and care of his orchards.

The Great Register of Siskiyou County, California 1892 listed George Wohlfert as age 65 and being 5 feet 5 inches tall with light complexion, grey eyes and brown hair. George Wohlfert died at his home at Spring Gulch about 1897 at the age of 72 years. Historical Society records state that Mr. and Mrs. Richard Werst walked several miles to his residence to conduct Salvation Army burial services for this stranger. He was buried at a point above his house on a small knoll beside a rose bush. The rose bush is reportedly still there beside a small indent in the ground.

Some of the apple trees he planted are still growing there according to family.

### WILLIAM FREDERICK WOHLFERT (Second Generation)

Willie was the only child of George and Christiana Wohlfert. If he attended school it would have been at the Rush Creek School House located near Summerville. This school was for the elementary grades and when the kids finished all the courses offered they just quit going. There were no graduation ceremonies in those days.

After George and Christiana divorced, Willie and his mother went to live in Cecilville. Here Christiana married Alexander Gillis in July 31 1883. These towns were located in Klamath County, (now Siskiyou County). The Gillis' had one son Walter who worked for the United States Forest Service in Colorado.

Willie became a hard-riding and hard-drinking cowboy. He rode for old man Sightman, who operated sawmills in the area well into the 1920's.

On Feb 4, 1895, at Summerville, California, Willie married Rosa Clara Jordon, daughter of Mr. Josiah Procter Jordan. She and her six sisters and one brother had attended Rush Creek School. Her father was a stern New Englander from Maine. He loved to entertain. Jordan had ranches at Rush Creek and Farden Gulch, and supplied the area with local beef.

Willie and Rosa had two sons. Leonard Jordan was born January 14, 1896 at Cecilville, and Frederick Webster was born May 22, 1897 at Petersburg. The boys attended Rush Creek School and later the family moved to Yreka where the boys could attend Yreka High School. Willie followed gold mining most of his life. He loved to hunt and fish and could make venison jerky that tasted better than candy. He also loved to drink whiskey which was a sore to his family until the late 1920's when he promised his sons he would quit. He seemed very tall to me as a child, and he had sharp blue eyes, sandy colored hair, and a mustache.

When his youngest son Fred, married and moved to Oregon, Willie and Rosa went with them. Willie bought a truck and hauled fruit in the summer and fertilizer in the winter. When they moved back to California, Willie went back to mining. He lived in the Deadwood Creek area, west of Yreka. When his health failed, Willie and Rosa moved to a home on his eldest son's farm near Sacramento.

In the winter of 1936 he died from facial cancer, a long and progressive illness that had resulted from a tooth ulceration while he had been mining, and could not get out to see a dentist because of the heavy snow. He was 61 years old.

I remembered one day that my Grandmother Wohlfert finally allowed me to go on an all day hike by myself. I had been staying with them during part of the summer vacation and was about ten years old. She told me to follow a familiar route to the salt lick, where I watched the deer, then on up the hill to Grandpa's mine. He had made an extensive tunnel in the side of the hill and would only let me go as far as the tunnel was

reinforced with timbers. It was damp and dark in the tunnel but what a glorious sight to see streaks of gold in the rock. Grandpa was a real fun grandpa, but when he was working he was very serious so I couldn't stay long. He would extract a wheelbarrow of dirt over the side of the tunnel opening and as it was full of fool's gold, I was really fascinated.

Then I went on up the hill per his instructions to the Schroeder Mine on the very top. On the way I found a Yellow Lady's Slipper, a member of the orchid family. The lady at the Schroeder mine put the flower in a glass of water for me and invited me to stay and have lunch. After lunch, I started back by a different and unfamiliar route.

My Grandmother had always told me to carry a tree limb to ward off snakes and bears and to always follow a stream downhill if I became lost. I wasn't lost, but so engrossed in the beauty of the hills, that I veered to the North a little too much, so I hit the creek a few miles too far from home. As it was getting dusk I came upon a Miner's cabin. Two miners were home and when I told them who I was they told me where I was and to just follow the creek down stream to Willie and Rosie's cabins.

Thirty years later when my husband and I took our daughter for a ride in that area and stopped at my Grandparent's old homes, there were two men living there. I told them again who I was and they remembered Willie and Rosie's grandchildren visiting in the summer so long ago. These two old bachelor miners were working my Grandfather's old mine under a new owner.

In the early days many Chinese had cabins and stamp mills near their mines. One such mill was near my Grandparent's home and I used to inspect it very carefully as the structure was fairly rotten. My Grandfather taught us kids to count up to ten, on our fingers, in Chinese. As we counted, each finger would be folded down into a fist and Grandpa would slap his knees and roar with laughter. He was a loveable Grandpa and each one of us three kids thought he loved each one the best.

#### LEONARD JORDAN WOHLFERT

(Third generation)

Leonard Jordan Wohlfert, first son of Willie and Rosa Wohlfert, attended Rush Creek School. Most of the children were cousins and for awhile their aunt taught them. Like all the kids in the area, he soon learned to hunt and fish. He also learned to be an excellent walker on snow shoes. His family moved to Yreka where he could attend Yreka High School. Leonard graduated with the Class of 1917 along with his friend Charles Shaffer. Leonard and Charles went to Sacramento and worked in the Post Office.

When World War I started, a number of men from Siskiyou county enlisted in the Army and went overseas to France together. There is a listing of the men on the flagpole in front of the old Carnegie Library, now Yreka Police Station. Leonard was among those men and upon his return he stayed in the Army Reserves, attending camp every summer.

Leonard J. Wohlfert and Mable F. Goodridge were married in Sacramento, Dec. 31, 1924. Leonard was still working in the Post Office and he bought a small home and farm in Rio Linda. Their two daughters were born in Sacramento; Marjory June on Jan. 5, 1926 and Betty Lou on August 9, 1929.

During World War II, Leonard was sent to India as an Air Force Major in the United States Army. After his return, he

again went back to his job in the Sacramento Post Office. He had picked up Malaria and a few bugs in India and his health deteriorated. He died in Sacramento on Feb. 9, 1950 where he is buried. Leonard was 54 years old. His mother out lived him and died June 14, 1951 at 75 years. She had a kidney infection.

Leonard's widow Mable stayed in Sacramento near her daughter Mary Lou and family. Marjory, their other daughter lives in Roseburg, Oregon.

#### FREDERICK WEBSTER WHOLFERT

(Third generation)

Fred Wohlfert, the second son of Willie and Rosa Wohlfert also attended Rush Creek school. Later his family moved to Yreka. Fred joined the Epworth League, a young people's group sponsored by the Methodist Church. There he became a good friend of Archie Norton, and at a club social met Mary Alice (Mamie) Norton, a sister of Archie's. Fred and Archie were also members of Yreka Odd Fellows Lodge.

Mamie's family had come from Michigan by train to California in 1900 and settled in the Weed Area. Her parents, Robert Davis Norton and Alice Avery Milbourn Norton had three sons and two daughters and an older son Ernest George Milbourn, Mrs. Norton's son by a previous marriage. The elder Mr. Millbourn had died. The Norton family was originally from Ontario Canada. They were farmers and lumbermen.

Fred and Mamie were married in Dunsuir, California on June 18, 1918. They were married in the home of her oldest brother Ernest Milbourn. Two weeks later Fred enlisted in the United States Army and spent his basic training in Oakland, California. In September his bride found a place to live nearby. He was later sent to a camp in Texas. Here he was being prepared to go overseas when the Armistice was signed November 11, 1918.

Fred was discharged February of 1919 and went back to Stevenson, Washington, where his wife was living with her parents. Fred and Mamie moved to Hood River, Oregon and both of their folks families followed. While there, the Wohlfert's lived in a huge two story house in Hood River and Robert Norton lived nearby. Robert Norton worked as a millwright in a lumber mill and the Wohlfert men bought trucks to haul lumber and fruit.

Fred Wohlfert's daughter, Doris Marie, was born November 24, 1919 at home in Hood River, Oregon. The winter was severe and mother and daughter were very sick. The family moved again across the Columbia River to Sodaville, Washington where their second daughter Blanche Evelyn was born November 8, 1920.

Ernest Milbourn wrote that the Union Oil Company in Grenada needed a truck driver for deliveries in Siskiyou County, so Fred came down and applied. He got the job and moved his family to Grenada where he purchased a two bedroom home, a barn and several lots to keep a milk cow.

Alice Estella, a third daughter of Fred Wohlfert was born October 6, 1923 in the Yreka hospital. The two older girls attended school in Grenada. After school they would deliver milk to the neighbors.

Fred was an avid fisherman and hunter. He took his family on many picnics where he could fish for trout and salmon. Fred made sun-dried venison jerky and would string it on the clothes line to dry. At night he kept his rifle near his bed to have it handy to scare off cats and night animals trying to get at the meat.

The Union Oil Company promoted Fred to "Manager", and was to work at a dealership in Chico, California. Before the family could make the move, Fred became sick. He was put to bed at home for a week with acute appendicitis. Grandma Norton, whose husband had died the year before, came to help. Leonard and wife came from Sacramento to visit his brother.

Fred didn't get any better and one night his appendix burst. He was taken to the Yreka Hospital for an emergency operation and died two days later, January 20, 1927. He was 29 years 7 months and 28 days old. He was buried in the Evergreen Cemetery after services in the Yreka Methodist Church where he had been a member.

After Fred's death the family moved to Yreka to live with Grandma Norton. Mamie went to work as a bookkeeper for her brother Ernest Millbourn who owned the Electric Supply Co. in Yreka. Her brother Archie also worked there until his death in 1939. Her other two brothers and sister and three daughters also worked in the store over the years.

Fred had brown eyes, black hair and a red beard which he kept shaved. His daughters all have brown eyes and brown hair, quite a contrast among all the blue eyed blondes in the family. The brown eyes were inherited from Grandma Rosa Wohlfert. The only other contact with the Wohlfert family was about 1920 when William and Rosa Wohlfert went to Seattle to meet a relative by the name of Wohlfert from New York.

Leonard Wohlfert's two daughters and Fred Wohlfert's three daughters all married, and had children. Blanche's son John Wohlfert Fincher is the only one to carry the family name. Doris married George Ernest Betts, April 12 1941 and their daughter Barbara married Larry A. Lee of Weed, California September 22, 1962 and they have two daughters Lori Ann and Lisa Ann, the reason for this genealogy.

## *Pioneer Legacy*

*by Della F. Cameron*

*To steal from today precious moments  
where we seek our progenitor's names  
is to build for the golden tomorrows  
a pride in our ancestral fame.*

*Though dusty and faded their footprints,  
what a story each step has to tell,  
for the ghosts of their legacies haunt us  
in the characters we form as well!*

*So strong and devoted and faithful,  
do you think they would smile as they sleep  
at the glow of the torch they bequeathed us,  
for the faith which they labored to keep?*

## The Wohlfert Genealogy:

- 1 - John George WOHLFERT (b 26 Feb 1825 d. 1897)  
Sp: Christina GEORGE (b. 1857 m. 1873)
- 2 - William Fredrick WOHLFERT (b. 23 Nov 1874 d. 1936)  
Sp: Rosa Clara JORDON (m. 4 Feb 1895 d. 14 Jun 1951)
- 3 - Leonard Jordon WOHLFERT (b. 14 Jan 1896 d. 9 Feb 1950)  
Sp: Mable F. GOODRIDGE (m. 31 Dec 1924)
- 4 - Marjory June WOHLFERT (b. 5 Jan 1926)
- 4 - Betty Lue WOHLFERT (b. 9 Aug 1929)
- 3 - Fredrick Webster WOHLFERT (b. 22 May 1897 d. 20 Jan 1927)  
Sp: Marry Alice NORTON (m. 18 Jun 1918)
- 4 - Doris Marie WOHLFERT (b. 24 Nov 1919)
- 4 - Blanch Evelyn WOHLFERT (b. 8 Nov 1920)
- 4 - Alice Estella WOHLFERT (b. 6 Oct 1923)

# The Siskiyou Pioneer and Yearbook

ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY



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Cumulative Index

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Compiled by  
Anna Marie and Evertt Gorden Hager

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