

Member's Name: Beverly A. Schuele

Member's National #: C225

Full Name of Farmer: Benjamin Franklin McBride

Born: 10 Jun 1845 Noble Co., OH

Died: 24 Nov 1915 Boone Co., NE

Title: *Benjamin Franklin and Phebe (Dufoe) McBride – Beloved and Revered*

My beloved ancestor, Benjamin Franklin McBride, was born on 10 June 1845, in Noble County Ohio, and comes from a long line of farmer ancestors all the way back to Ireland. His great-grandfather, James “The Irishman” McBride, was in Virginia as early as 1754 and is mentioned in George Washington’s Personal Diary (housed in the Library of Congress), as having farmed 34 acres of land for him. Benjamin’s grandfather continued the farming tradition and lived and died in Hampshire Co., VA. His father, William McBride, left Wheeling, West Virginia as a young man and moved westward with his aunts and uncles (Lyons and Chenowith families) and purchased land in Ohio in the 1830’s. He married Mary Keith on December 22, 1837 in Morgan Co., OH and together had five children, one of them being, my great-great grandfather, Benjamin Franklin McBride. The family moved to Delaware County IA when Benjamin was about eight-years of age. Sadly, not long after they had moved, Benjamin’s mother and little sister died. Benjamin grew to manhood helping his father raise corn, hay, and livestock. When he was just shy of 18 years of age, he enlisted as a Union Soldier in the Civil War, Company B, 4th Iowa Cavalry. (fast forward several years).

In the Spring of 1873, Benjamin F. McBride, wife Phebe (Dufoe) McBride, and three small children set out in company with Phebe’s brothers, Watson and Lorenzo Dufoe and their families, in covered wagons from their homes in Delaware County, Iowa, bidding farewell to their friends and relatives there, to make the tedious five-week journey to their new sod homes in Boone County, Nebraska. It rained most of the time they were on this journey and the Elkhorn river was too high to ford. They finally arrived at their destination on June 15, 1873 and settled in southern Boone County 2-/12 miles north of Belgrade, Nebraska. Benjamin homesteaded this land, which was an entitlement for serving in the Civil War.

It was a very difficult life for these early settlers. According to written records of our homesteader’s son, Oliver Austin McBride, his parents, Benjamin and Phebe, lived for six straight weeks on biscuits made with water, as there was no butter, milk, potatoes or meat to go

with them. It was told that my great-great grandfather had only one shirt to his back and no underwear and had to haul his wood from Timber Creek in all kinds of weather in this manner, which was at least five miles away. He went to bed early so that his only shirt could be washed and dried. Their main crop was corn, wheat, and prairie hay. They also raised cattle, hogs and chickens. The hogs and chickens were butchered to feed their large family. Benjamin McBride used a team of draft horses and a one blade plow to break the sod. I remember my ancestors saying that one of the horses was named, "Bob." The loss of crops was substantial and devastating in the years of 1873, '75, and '76. Two of these year's grasshoppers ate everything including the fenceposts! In a two-year period, his total crop amounted to 135 bushels of wheat! Their sod house was warm and comfortable during the winter. Oliver Austin McBride shared a memory he had during the time-period of 1876-77. He states, "I saw the rain run through the roof till they scooped it out of the door. The only way they could keep my baby sister dry, was to put her under the table in her cradle and pull the oilcloth down over her."

During those early years on the homestead, Benjamin F. McBride had to travel to Columbus, NE for supplies--a distance of 50 miles, which was a three-day trip. Those times were anxious times for Phebe when she was left alone with the little ones. One of the times she was left alone, the Pawnee Skidi Indians who camped nearby, came to the house and asked for food. She was frightened, but she quieted the children and hid them under the beds, fed the Indians, and they went on their way. Another time, Benjamin heard a noise in the barn and went out to investigate. He found the Indians about to make away with his team. The Indians said, Heap brave man! And left without the horses.

In 1880, Benjamin F. McBride, with the help of his neighbors and family members built a frame house and they had a very attractive farmstead. Their children were old enough to attend school and were caught in the Great Blizzard of 1888. The blizzard struck just as school was out. The teacher tied the children together and they were led to the home of Watson Dufoe, the home nearest the schoolhouse. However, William and Austin McBride were determined to go on to their home so their parents wouldn't worry. William (my great-grandfather) said that he would have been hopelessly lost, but Oliver Austin nicknamed "Aus" was very nearsighted and was able to lead them home safely.

Benjamin and Phebe prospered during their lifetime and at the time of his death he had presented his seven children with 560 acres of land, besides owning the fine 320 acres that he

lived on in the fertile Cedar Valley. Their children were: William Lorenzo, (my great-grandfather), Oliver Austin, Maud Lena, Zaidee Marie, Zoe Madge, Cecil Edwin, and Benjamin, Jr.

Benjamin served as a county commissioner in Boone County Nebraska for several years. He was prominent in public matters and it was seldom that the party of his choice held a convention without the name of Benjamin McBride appearing as a delegate.

Phebe was a kind, loving, unselfish wife and mother. All her neighbors were her friends. It can truly be said that she lived her life for others. She was a faithful member of the Pinnacle Hill Methodist Church. Four of their children were born on the homestead and this was her home all her life, with the exception, of the few years that they lived in California due to her husband's ill health. Phebe was a very small woman, but what she lacked in size, she made up in strength and courage. There were many times that she stood between her husband and her children, when she thought his punishment would be too harsh or unfair. Education and music were very important to Phebe and she made sure that her children were afforded good educations and instruction in music.

Benjamin and Phebe moved back from California in 1915. He died the day before Thanksgiving the same year and was only 70 years of age. He was carried to his final resting place in the Belgrade Main Cemetery on a horse drawn cart. His funeral was attended by many neighbors and friends from the community. Phebe continued to live on the home place with her youngest son after the death of her husband. She died on June 13, 1932 at the home of her eldest son, William Lorenzo, southwest of Belgrade. She was buried beside her husband at the Belgrade Main Cemetery. It is something to note, that ins spite of the difficult days of pioneering, this couple did not lose a single child.

The submitter of this story, Bev (McBride) Schuele was blessed to be able to grow up on the very same homestead farmed by her parents Bill and Alberta McBride. When she was growing up, she remembers the final resting place of the one-horse plow w/wooden handles laying hidden in the tall brome grass underneath an old Elm. In the southeast corner of the family's barn hung the old leather horse harnesses, wooden yokes, and fly nets covered in 80-year-old, choking dust! After 148 years, this homestead still belongs in the family and will be passed down to the next generation. Benjamin and Phebe are loved and revered by their descendants for their character, faith-filled lives, hard work, and civic duty.



Benjamin Franklin McBride



Phebe (Dufoe) McBride



Homesteaders, Benjamin Franklin McBride, and his wife, Phebe (Dufoe) McBride in their later years.