

AARON S. NEELY, SR.

Clarence Bagley, "Aaron S. Neely, Sr," History of King County, Washington. Seattle and Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1929. Volume II, p. 861 - 64.

From boyhood Aaron S. Neely, Sr., has lived in King county, and personal experience has made him familiar with the various phases of frontier existence in this region. As one of the early orchardists and farmers of the county he contributed his full quota toward the development and utilization of its natural resources and since his retirement from agricultural pursuits he has resided in Auburn enjoying the peace and contentment that result from the knowledge of tasks well done.

Mr. Neely was born in Carroll county, Tennessee, March 1, 1849, a son of David A. and Irena (Kemp) Neely, natives respectively of Tennessee and Virginia. The father was an overseer on a large plantation in his native state and in 1853 began his preparations for a trip to the west, constructing a prairie schooner and also making yokes for his oxen.

When he started for the territory of Washington in 1854 he had a good outfit and came by way of the Naches pass through the Cascade mountains, arriving in the White river valley in October of that year after a long and hazardous journey of five months. He filed on a donation claim of three hundred and twenty acres two and a half miles northwest of what is now the town of Kent and courageously undertook the laborious task of hewing a farm out of the wilderness.

He first built a house, using split cedar boards for the walls and floors and split shakes for the roof. Mr. Neely then applied himself to the work of removing the dense growth of trees and brush from his place and eventually cleared all of the land, transforming the wild tract into a productive, well improved farm, on which he spent the remainder of his life.

During the 1850s he served as a lieutenant in the United States army and was the officer who planned the campaign which practically ended the Indian wars in the White river valley. As a result of his strategy the savages were caught unawares and routed. This brave pioneer was called to his final rest in 1914, and his wife passed away in 1923.

They were the parents of seven children: John, who was born in Tennessee and is now deceased; Aaron S.; Samuel, deceased, who was also a native of Tennessee; Seletha, who was born in October, 1854, and was the first white child born in the White river valley; David, who has likewise passed away; J. H., who lives on the old donation claim near Kent; and Thomas Aaron S. Neely, Sr., was a child of five when the family came to the Pacific northwest, and his early instruction was obtained in the district school near his father's farm. Afterward he attended the Territorial University in Seattle for one term and then returned to the homestead, on which -he remained until his marriage, operating the ranch for his father for four years.

In 1876 he preempted a claim of one hundred and twenty acres one mile west of what is now Auburn, securing a tract of swamp land with a heavy growth of timber and brush, and in order to gain access to his place had to cut a road for a mile through the dense jungle.

For about two years he lived on the place, clearing a portion of the land, and he became the owner of the property. He then located in the Green river valley and filed on one hundred and twenty acres of railroad land, to which he later added forty acres, then four acres and next a tract of twenty acres, eventually acquiring a ranch of one hundred and eighty-four acres.

Mr. Neely built a log cabin on the farm, which is located two and a half miles from Auburn, and gradually removed the heavy timber and brush from the land. As the years passed he brought all of it under cultivation and set out a large orchard of four hundred apple trees. He was one of the leading fruit growers of the district and there engaged in farming from 1876 until 1900.

He then leased the ranch to his son and bought seven lots in Auburn. On this ground he erected a substantial residence, in which he has since lived retired. He invested in two more lots, on which he erected modern homes, thus contributing toward Auburn's up building and improvement. At one time he owned a tract of fifty acres near Kent, this being a part of his father's old donation claim.

Mr. Neely was married March 14, 1876, to Sarah Graham, a native of San Francisco, California, and a daughter of Julius and Caroline (Kelly) Felsenthal. The father was born on the Rhine in Germany and came to the United States as a young man, locating in Boston, Massachusetts.

There he was married in 1852 to Miss Caroline Kelly, a native of that city, and took his bride to California. They decided to remain in the Golden state, and Mr. Felsenthal embarked in business in Sacramento. He was one of its pioneer jewelers and successfully conducted his store until his death, which occurred about the year 1860.

Subsequently his widow married a Mr. Graham, and she was called to her final rest about 1908. Mr. and Mrs. Felsenthal had a family of six children: Sarah, who died in infancy; Samuel and William, also deceased; Sarah, now Mrs. Neely; Adolph, who lives in Seattle; and Julius, who has passed away. Mr. and Mrs. Neely became the parents of six children: Julius, deceased; William A.; Mrs. Lenore Dolan who lives near Kent and is the mother of three children, Irene, Margaret and Phillips; Mrs. Caroline Schultz, deceased, whose daughter, Mrs. Caroline Smith, resides near Kent; Aaron S., Jr., who owns a ranch on Green river and has a wife and three children, Mary, Mildred and Howard; and Mrs. Sarah Wolven, of Kelso.

William A. Neely resides one mile west of Auburn on the land which his father preempted and is now the owner of the property on-which he was born fifty years ago. All of the farms which the father developed in King county are still in the possession of the family and have never been encumbered with mortgages. From boyhood William A. Neely has followed agricultural pursuits and has that intimate knowledge of his occupation which results from years of practical experience and close study.

His fertile land is devoted chiefly to the growing of hay and garden truck. He has a large dairy herd of high grade Holstein cows and raises all of the roughage required by his cattle. His standards of farming are high, and everything about the ranch indicates his up-to-date methods and careful supervision.

In December, 1904, he married Miss Leona Jones, a native of Enumclaw, Washington, and also a member of one of the pioneer families of the state. She is a daughter of Lewis and Martha (Marsh) Jones, natives respectively of Iowa and Oregon. They have made their home in King county for many years, and their genuine worth is attested by all who know them. Mr. and Mrs. William A. Neely have become the parents of five children: Gladys, who is preparing for the profession of nursing; Stewart, Clifford and Kenneth, high school pupils; and Helen.

Mr. and Mrs. Aaron S. Neely, Sr., have eighteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. The sons and daughters were surrounded by the best influences during their youth and have become useful and influential members of society and a credit to the family. Mr. Neely is identified with both the York and Scottish Rite bodies of Masons and is a past master of King Solomon Lodge, No. 60, F. & A. M.

He is connected with the Grotto and Nile Temple of the Mystic Shrine and donated the land on which the new temple was built in Auburn in 1924. Both he and his wife are members of Cyclamen Chapter of the Eastern Star, of which he was thrice made patron. He has passed through all of the chairs in the lodge and encampment of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and his wife and daughter Caroline became charter members of the Auburn organization of Rebekahs, of which Mrs. Neely is a past noble grand.

For many years Mr. Neely was a member of the school board and also served as road supervisor for a considerable period. Unselfish, broad-minded and public-spirited he has given generously of his time, efforts and means to the general good, and his influence upon the life of his community has been of the highest order. Time has dealt kindly with him and although eighty years of age, he is active and alert, deriving much enjoyment from the sport of hunting.

As one of the pioneers of King county, Mr. Neely is widely known and an exemplary life has won for him the high and enduring regard of his fellowmen.

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NEELY, AARON S. Harvey K. Hines. Illustrated history of Washington State. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1893., p. 887

Aaron S. Neely was born near Madrid Bend, Carrel county, Tennessee, on March 1, 1849. his parents were David A. and Irena (Kemp) Neely, the former a native of Tennessee, the latter of Virginia.

In 1856 the family came across the plains and located on the White river, where they took up a donation claim, just below Kent. They were the first settlers in that immediate neighborhood. They were soon compelled to remove to Seattle on account of the hostility of the Indians.

His father, however, spent his time between his claim and Seattle with his family. On one memorable occasion, when he was about to leave Seattle for his place at White river, he was notified that the Indians had attacked the latter settlement. This was the occasion of the historical massacre.

His father then enlisted against the Indians, and fought throughout the campaign, while the family remained at the little fort on the Henry Van Assel place. After three years' absence, they went back to the home place.

Our subject was reared in the State of Washington. When he was twenty-seven years old he married, and bought for his home, the place where he now resides, consisting of 120 acres, which he has paid for by hard work, at intervals for other parties. He raises stock and grain, and has recently purchased another place of 100 acres, and has a sawmill located there.

Mr. Neely was married on March 14, 1874, to Miss Sarah Felsanthal, of San Francisco, California. They have had nine children, of whom there are five living, viz.: Julius, William A., Lenore, Carrie, and Aaron, Jr. Those deceased are Ida and May, and Robert A.