

A LEGEND LAID TO REST

The Life of Samuel McCune
and George Washington Horrace

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Introduction

In his outstanding family genealogy my brother, Martin Scott McVay, included an intriguing item he entitled THE LEGEND OF SAM McCUNE (G.W. HORRACE). This was a fragmentary and speculative account of the life of our Grandmother Anna McCune McVay's long lost older brother, Sam. Briefly, the story went that Sam left home (Athens, Ohio) for the California gold rush and after some misadventures and many years he died in Caldwell, Idaho under the name G.W. Horrace. Martin recalled that Grandmother McVay told him that she and Wallace went to Caldwell in later years to look for the Horrace family, but did not find anybody.

At the end of his account Martin quotes from a letter from Cousin Dorothy Skinner in which she wonders, "...what background story Horrace told his family.."

I can now tell you that he didn't tell them very much. Not even his wife knew that George Horrace was not his real

name until they went through his belongings after his death. None of his grandchildren I have talked to knew his true place of birth or of the events in his life before 1864 except that he had been a forty-niner in the California gold rush before going to Utah. They knew nothing of his experiences between his departure from the California gold fields and his arrival in Utah. These were exciting and unusual experiences which Sam had reported in detail to his parents in a letter he wrote to them in 1864. The main event in the story they had heard through his son, John Horrace, was not known to the McCunes in Ohio; and apparently not known by Sam's wife, Rachel, or by any of the other children until it was told by son John.

I now know nearly all of the story of Sam McCune. The complete story, with every detail, went to the grave with George Horrace.

The account of Samuel McCune's life from his departure from Ohio in 1851 to his arrival among the Mormons in Utah in 1863 or 1864, then to his arrival in Caldwell, Idaho in 1892, and finally to his death in 1902 is equal to the best stories of that period in pioneer America.

I am going to tell you that story. In fact I am going to tell it twice. First, I am going to tell it briefly for those of you who just want the facts. Then, I'm going to tell it again for those of you who can abide my story telling, can put up with some minor digressions and who want to know all of the details.

Hopefully, those of you who read the first telling will be tempted to read the second.

Charles Wallace McVay