

The mysterious head stone found in the backyard of a Surf Pines home.

The other day, while walking my dog Maggie with my friend Ken Beem and his dog Gracie, he mentioned that there was a gravestone lying next to a neighbors mail box. This piqued my curiosity so I contacted the neighbor who indicated that their landscaper had found the marker while excavating in the backyard. She sent me a picture and relayed that she had tried looking up the person, whose name was on the gravestone. Susanna E. Moisio who was born in 1879 and died in 1956. She then went on to explain that both she and her husband had checked Google and people at his work to no avail. She did indicate they had dug down quite a ways to confirm there was no grave under it.



I started looking into Polk directories, telephone directories and school records, located in our Internet archive collection for the Clatsop County Historical Society. I found a trove of interesting information. Once I had identified who Sanna was and her family I then posted questions about this in several of the Clatsop County historical private groups in FaceBook and proceeded to obtain even more information. These items included a copy of Sanna's death certificate and Arvid's naturalization paperwork. I also received comments from the Grand Daughter .

Susanna was an Astorian resident most of her life. She was married to a carpenter named Arvid and had two kids Ellen born 1908 and Walfred John "Fritz" Moisio born in 1909 died 1993 (aged 84). He was married to Thelma Blanche Bandy Moisio, Born in 1912 and died in 2006.

Arvid worked as a carpenter. He was a pattern maker, one of the most skilled shipyard jobs at the time. He worked at many of the shipbuilding companies including the Wilson shipbuilding Co. He also was a fisherman. He was President of the Astoria Lodge of the Finnish Brotherhood during World War 1 through the early 20s. Their daughter Ellen graduated in 1925 and was in a sewing club in the 40s. She ended up marrying Arnie Jarvi.

Susan Underwood, Arvid and Sanna's granddaughter explained, "When he first arrived in Astoria, Arvid fished, but photos and postcard notes indicate he was soon doing pile setting and related carpentry work. By the time he married he may have been building or repairing boats also. A Finnish immigrant told me Arvid came from an area of Finland where he could have learned boatbuilding. According to Thelma Moisio, Arvid was a contractor on a bank building in Astoria, probably in the 1920s. By the late 1920s or early 1930s Arvid traveled to Bristol Bay annually for the Spring-Summer fishing season. He was employed by Columbia River Packers to maintain the gillnet boats used for their Bristol Bay fishing

operations. In the winters he built wooden gillnet boats for the Columbia Boatbuilding Co owned by the Tolonen Brothers. It was located at 750 Marine Drive. The Daily Astorian published an article on the history of Columbia Boatbuilding Co., May 11, 1988.

Arvid and Susanna were married on 1 January 1907. Before they married Sanna was a cook in the boarding house where Arvid lived. Sanna rented a house up the street from the boarding house. After they were married they rented apartments in Union Town and, during WWI rented a house. In the early 1930s they bought the house at 237 Antwerp.

Arvid died on 9 August 1943 in Alaska. He was employed as a carpenter by the Columbia River Packers Co. when he died and was buried in Naknek, Alaska because of the issues with World War II. That explains why he was not buried with Sanna.



One comment from the Astoria Historical Group on FaceBook, “Her daughter Ellen married Arnie Jarvi and they had one adopted daughter, Marilyn, who graduated from AHS in 1960. Was married to Jim Riser. She was a character. Jarvi lived with her mother on Florence Avenue. I remember Mrs. Moisio who lived on the ground floor of the house with Jarvi’s upstairs.”

I also saw a post from the Grand Daughter of the families who has owned Astoria Granite Works, who explained “There is a monument for the family in Ocean View cemetery. My Grandfather, then my dad and uncle owned Astoria Granite Works from 1917 until the mid 90s. Every property in the family has replaced old gravestones as walkways etc. it could be that when the family replaced the marker they wanted to use the old marker in their yard, i.e. a stepping stone.”

It turns out that was the case. When Sanna died in 1956, she was buried in a traditional burial at Ocean View Cemetery in Warrenton. It appears that the Gravestone found in the backyard of our Surf Pines resident was the original grave stone.

Later on, using the old Surf Pines directories, also located in the CCHS digital archive, we found that Wolfred J “Fritz” Woisio and his wife Thelma actually lived at 2332 Lucas in Surf Pines (now 89792 Sea Breeze). Fritz died in 1993. Thelma continued to live there and remarried Leo Hess till she passed away in 2006 at the age of 94. The next entry in the SP directory was for 2006-07 which shows Susan Underwood and Sandra Bergin being owners, Susan was Brian Underwood's mother, the grandson of Thelma who passed away in 2007.

The last entry is when Underwood and Bergin sold this home in 2011. So it appears that Susan Underwood was Thelma and Fritz's Daughter and Brian was her son. We also found out from Susan Underwood that Fritz and Thelma originally bought their lot on Lucas from Bill Manion, Barney Lucas's main real estate agent, for \$3,000 in 1965. They moved into their new home in 1968-69..

Once we figured this out, we reached out to three of our more senior residents in Surf Pines, who live at the north end of Sea Breeze, to see if they remembered Fritz and Thelma. One responded back with, "I remember Moisios well. When we moved into our house with a 3 yr old and a 6 week old in 1987 she let me use her phone while she held our baby Carl. Very nice people". However she did not remember much more.

Another member replied, "Yes I remember them well. Fritz checked every day on us as we built our house. We knew Thelma as well, also through her second marriage. Fritz bought the house way back when, as a fishing abode. They were the sweetest couple. Other than that I can't remember much else. I might still have their daughter's phone numbers if you want to delve into it further."



In a follow up email, this member mentioned that the two daughters were Susan Underwood and Sandra Bergin and she provided me with their phone numbers. Following up with phone messages to both sisters, I heard back from them. They proceeded to add additional information to this story. Turns out that when Fritz died in 1993 there was a second Grave Stone created that included Sanna, Fritz and Thelma, his wife, with no date of death for Thelma.

In 2007, Susan Underwood's son Brian passed away at the age of 32. That is when the last or third Grave Stone was created, which included Sanna, son Fritz, wife Thelma who died in 2006 and at the bottom Brian D. Underwood Fritz and Thelma's grandson.

Fritz had a 35 year career with the US Forest Service, beginning in 1934 in Missouri. In 1946 he returned to the West Coast and worked on several forests in Oregon and Washington. From 1959 to 1965 he was Supervisor of the Okanogan National Forest. He retired in 1968 from the Regional Office in Portland..

Susan Underwood, Sanna's granddaughter, has written an excellent article about what she calls the Church Fins, which is how she describes those Finnish immigrants who were not active socialists. She uses her family history and the fact that Arvid was president of the Finnish Brotherhood International and tried gallantly to keep the socialists out of their organization. It is an excellent piece that shows how many of the Finnish Immigrants supported family and social interactions.

In closing, how did the first grave stone end up four houses south of Fritz and Thelma's home in Surf Pines? Well Susan and Sandra think they remember why. They said, "Mom was friends, possibly through PEO, with the woman who lived at the address where the gravestone was found, around the time Dad died. She probably offered it as a stone to help with a landscaping project, similar to the pattern you found in your research". Now the real question arises, where is the second gravestone located?

So, Surf Pines may have another gravestone located in someone's backyard. We hope that it is found before another Holoween passes.