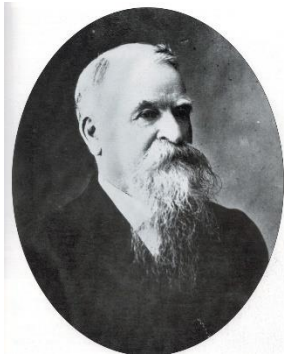


We couldn't get far in our Union stories without a little history...



Many of us know something of John McReavy and may have visited the house he built above Union in 1890. But what do we really know about what he thought or felt?

There are facts about him... born in 1840 in Northfield Maine, making his way to the west at just 21, when he was looking for his brother in the gold fields of California.

When he learned his brother had died, John continued north. He worked in the timber industry, injured himself logging, and got a job as a cook. It's rumored he wasn't very good at it, "Got more flour in his beard than the bread".

We can guess that he was determined and ambitious... first, he bought a logging company in Belfair for \$7,000, no money down, agreeing to pay it off in a year. He did, and within a decade was the owner of a successful logging and sawmill operation. He built the Masonic Lodge, the Occidental Hotel, a church, and the wharf near the general store he ran for several years. He named this place Union City. And he was busy, never sat still... besides all the building, the sawmill, and running the store, during his time here he was a school superintendent, postmaster, and a real estate agent.

John was generous. According to the book written by his daughter, [How When and Where on Hood Canal](#), he seldom refused credit to anyone at the store and many men got their start with his help. He was also known as honest—one of his nicknames was Honest John. Big John Mac and John, the Sage of Union, were others.

He was also a family man. In 1880 he married Fannie Dow Gove. Their honeymoon was on a tugboat and their first home a block house — a fortified structure built primarily for observation and defense with the holes to fire

through and second story overhanging the first. Later they move to a fine house his father-in-law built for them, and then to the home that became known as McReavy Mansion. They had three children — Herbert, Edwin and Helen. Helen, known as Nell, married Ludwig Anderson. They lived in the house for many years. Their grand-niece Eleanor, was the last of the family to live there.

History websites providing information about John say he called Union the “Venice of the Pacific”, so it seems he was also a dreamer. And given that he became a member of the Washington State Constitutional Convention in 1889 and then a senator in the first legislature of the state, it looks like he was also a believer. He worked hard for education, helping establish Washington’s state university and the state college in Pullman. And he was an avid supporter of Women’s Suffrage, although the state did not grant it until 1910.

The depression of 1893 took some of his dreams away, bankrupting Union City when the railroads failed to materialize as he had hoped they would. We don’t know what dreams lingered, but John lived in that house above Union until he died in 1918.

His daughter, Helen said, “He was a much loved man. Not only by his immediate family, but his brother, his nephews, his in-laws, and those who worked for him admired him.”

You’ll get to read Part II, the resurrection of McReavy House through the hard work of local residents, in an upcoming newsletter.

Thanks for reading... Dawn Hanson Smart