

THE STORY OF ISAAC AND ANNIE NURICK

Back in 1895, great excitement for Wulf and Lena Sanders! The birth of their first grandchild! Annie Nurick gave birth to her first child, (the first of eight) a beautiful baby daughter named after Annie's late grandmother, Sara Sanders. Little Sarah was lovingly known a "Cissie". Interestingly there was only a difference in age, of four years between Cissie and her Aunt Ethel Sanders! The two girls were to become lifelong friends.

The story of Isaac Nurick, his origins, and his family is one of rags to riches and from what we understand, back to rags!

Isaac Nurick came from the Lithuanian town of Shavel or Shavli as it was also known. The name Nurick is also an interesting story. The story goes that the surname was acquired by one of Isaac's forbears in Lithuania. One winter the local church bell broke loose and fell into the river below. The only person able or willing to jump into the icy water and tie a rope around the bell, was a young Jewish boy. The church bell was pulled out of the river and because they were so grateful for this brave deed, the young Jewish boy was given the name of "Nurick", which means "bell saver"!



Isaac Annie & baby Cissie

There is however another story regarding the origins of the Nurick or Nurock surname. There are records in the museum of Shavli which make mention of a story that took place in 1643. The bell from the local old church was being transferred to a new church by means of a sledge. As the sledge was being pulled over a frozen lake, the ice cracked and the bell fell off the sledge into the lake below. Nobody was able to retrieve the bell. However, a visiting Jew to Shavli (at the time Jews were not permitted to live in the town), came to an agreement with the Duke of Shavli, that should he be able to retrieve the bell, the duke would give Jews the right of residence to the town. This Jewish man was successful and was given the nickname of "Nureka". Apparently, the ancient Russian word for otter is nureka. Either story is quite fascinating!

Although Isaac was, according to family legend, a Hebrew scholar, the Sanders family looked down on him because of his origins. He was a "greener" who spoke English with a Yiddishe accent.

In the early days, before Isaac arrived in Oudtshoorn, he worked as a "smous" (trader), working out of Ladismith in partnership with Max Rose (Rose became famous for his virtual single-handed attempt to save the ostrich feather industry from total collapse at the end of W.W.1). Interestingly, based on records in the S.A. National Archives, both Isaac Nurick and Max Rose applied for naturalization during the year of 1897. A Mr H.W. Bekker applied on their behalf. Later, Isaac, as a feather buyer, entered into a partnership with Marcus Hotz. Hotz had married Bella Sanders' sister-in-law, Pauline Israelsohn.

A document from the archives of the Standard Bank might give one an idea of the relationship of father in law to son in law. It might be a perfectly innocent case of a lost cheque or was it more sinister?

21st February, 1898

Dear Sir,

If a bill in favour of I. Nurick is presented for payment, please do not pay.

By so doing you will oblige.

Yours Respectfully,

W. Sanders & Sons

(signed by Wulf Sanders)

In spite of his in-law's attitude, Isaac Nurick did very well for himself and his family in the ostrich feather trade. In the early days he was in partnership with Marcus Hotz. Records from the National Archives of South Africa of 1901, show Isaac in partnership with Jacob Nochamson, Louis Noach and Abraham Nurick.



Recreation of Isaac Nurick's feather dealer shop established 1887 at the CP Nel Museum.

The price of ostrich feathers was rising. Isaac managed to build up his business and the family prospered. Cissie Kaplan (Nurick) recalls that during the ostrich feather boom, the family were not short of anything. In their home they had two kitchens, one was only for use during Passover!

When the motor car first made its appearance, Isaac and Dr Stusser, were one of the first Oudtshoorn citizens to order a car, along with a mechanic and chauffeur by the name of Denis.

Isaac and Annie Nurick had eight children: Cissie, Harry, Michael, Lyle, Fanny, Ruby, Bert and Dots.

As a result of World War 1 and the change in women's fashions, the ostrich feather industry collapsed. All the feather merchants declared bankruptcy, with the exception of Isaac Nurick, who "refused to pay a penny for every pound" he owed. Isaac's banker didn't have to call in the debts, but did so, hoping to gain Isaac's wealth. Much of the family fortune was legally in his wife's name, so he had no reason to go under.

But rather than feel he was being dishonest, despite his wife's being on her death bed (Annie was dying of breast cancer) and having eight young children, he chose to declare all his wife's possessions and to sell what was left.



The *Oudtshoorn Courant* reported the passing of Annie Nurick (they referred to her as "Fanny Nurick") in their edition of 30 January 1918:

Death of Mrs I. Nurick

We regret to announce the death of Mrs Fanny Nurick, wife of Mr Isaac Nurick, which took place last evening after a long period of great suffering. The funeral takes place this afternoon, the cortege leaving the late residence of the deceased at 5 o'clock.

THANKS

MR ISAAC NURICK and family thank all relatives and friends for their kind expressions of sympathy and help during their late sad bereavement.

After the death of his wife, Annie in 1918, Isaac left his eldest daughter, Cissie, who was now a teacher, in charge of the family and went to London to try and collect monies owing to him. Apparently being unsuccessful, he was too ashamed to return home. The younger children were led to believe that he died!

One can just imagine what poor Isaac must have experienced. Penniless in London. Isaac was rigidly honest, even to the point of destroying his family, rather than their good name! He must have suffered severe humiliation when he lost everything and was unable to support his children, not to mention his unresolved grief from the loss of his beloved Annie!

Source: Derrick Lewis