

## **François “Benetsee” Finlay: (b. 1805)**

François was born 1805 near Fort Edmonton, he married Susan Dew-see-mah (b: 1835) François Benetsee Finlay is most remembered for having discovered gold in Montana. Son of Jacques “Jacko” Finlay and Josette Cree (a Chippewa) he was a grandnephew of Soteau St. Germain.

Benetsee likely spent part of his growing up years with his father brothers at Fort Spokane, and he trapped beaver as a freeman. When his father died in May 1828, he was invited, along with his brothers Augustine and Miaquam to join the Snake Party. He worked until 1842, at which point he left the employ of the HBC and continued to raise a family, who during that year were at the Finley Camp at Porte d'Enfer (Hellgate, Montana).

François Benetsee was a resourceful, enterprising man for, in 1847, he helped Neil McLean McArthur to build the HBC post, Fort Connah [Montana]. He also became an independent trader, trading everything from beads and cloth, to powder and lead with the native peoples and through this, gained a certain independence. He took horses to California and so he knew the area when he joined the Gold Rush with his brothers and family in 1849. Prior to this, he had settled a on a piece of land, with a creek, appropriately called Benetsee Creek [Gold Creek, Powell Co., Montana]. It was here that he discovered that he discovered the gold in 1851 or 1852. There are many versions of his discovery but it appears that he took gold dust that he obtained from his creek to Angus McDonald at Fort Connah; it was sent away and pronounced pure. The Montana Gold Rush got underway ten years after that. François' activities during his later years have not been traced but it is assumed he continued living in the area and died before 1873."

François Benetsee Finlay had one wife and possibly fifteen children, according to descendants. One wife was Susan/Dew-see-mah/Pen-na-ma (b.c.1835) daughter of Old Ignatius Chaves and Louise Ta-yoo-sah-mah. The four children, according to the 1860 census were Sophia (c.1842), Isadore (c.1847), Caroline (c.1854), and Rosette (c.1857).

### Reference:

<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=kenskin39&id=I45623>



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