


1963



Jubilee

*of the*

WARTBURG STATE SCHOOL



AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT  
OF THE PIONEERS AND OF  
THE BAFFLE CREEK DISTRICT  
OF QUEENSLAND



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## HISTORY OF BAFFLE CREEK DISTRICT

There is no history so interesting to anyone as that of his own district, and no period of a district is more important than that in which the lines of development are traced. and the course set for the future ; with this in mind we set out to collect together some of the facts and reminiscences of the days gone by, and commit them to paper for this year 1963 - the jubilee Year of Wartburg State School.

The dawning of Baffle Creek goes back to the very early days of the history of this State of Queensland. It was generally believed that the Creek owed its name to the fact that in the early 1860's the blacks murdered a shepherd on a station in the Gladstone district. A party of whites, led by the late William Henry Walsh and Charles J. Trundle, followed the tracks of the murderers as far as a scrub bordering the creek near its source, but the density of the scrub made further pursuit impossible. Mr. Walsh called a halt, saying "We are baffled". From this incident the creek received its name of Baffle Creek. In recent years, we have been told the name Baffle dates back to Captain Cook, who in 1770 chartered our eastern coast. The record, supposedly being in his log which was sent to Australia in recent years, sets out that he sent his men up the river in search of fresh water, they returned reporting that they were baffled, that in spite of the number of channels and islands in the lower reaches they could not find any fresh water, and the river was recorded in the log as Baffle. We know that a little later he found fresh water at Round Hill, where a cairn today marks the historical incident.

We read that "Bundaberg actually had its birth on Christmas Day, 1866, when two brothers, John and Gavin Stewart, timber getters from Baffle Creek pitched their camp near the present North Bundaberg Railway Station" so perhaps we can puff out our chests with pride, and say we played some part, too, in the birth of the city of Bundaberg.

Records show us that some time prior to 1870 a penal settlement was established at Baffle Creek. To date we have not been able to obtain the actual date, nor pin-point the spot, but undoubtedly it was down towards the heads. Captain Walker, who traded with the schooner "Iona", obtained seeds from mandarin and orange trees grown at the penal settlement by convicts to produce fruit for themselves, and planted them at Burrum. One of the resultant seedlings produced a good quality large late mandarin, which was named "Ellendale" after the property. Today the Ellendale mandarin, which had its birth at the convict settlement at Baffle Creek is grown extensively in Queensland. and is the main late season variety in the Gaydah district.

No history of this area would be complete without some mention of the early days of Rosedale. It was on the 12<sup>th</sup> July.

1853, that the Little family, coming from the South, camped on a creek near what is now Rosedale. That night they consumed a bottle of rum, and put the empty bottle in the fork of a tree and called the creek "Bottle Creek". They took up a selection of three blocks, each 25 square miles in area, and Mrs. Little gave the name of Rosedale to this selection which was used for the rearing of sheep for wool. For some years the wool was taken by dray to Maryborough and supplies brought back. This journey often took up to six weeks. Later Mr. Jas. Little chartered a small steamer, the "Albion", to bring up rations and take the wool away. The "Albion" steamed up Baffle Creek and berthed at Por. 1 Parish of Tottenham, where Mr. and Mrs. W. Street now live.

It was in the early 1880's that Mr. Charles Skyring with his sons Frederick Henry and Albert, came from Brisbane. He selected quite a large area of land which they called Baffle Creek Cattle Station and engaged in the cattle industry. As transport was out of the question he commenced a boiling-down works on the banks of the creek, and later a sawmill was established too. Soft woods had been taken from this part of the State for some years prior, but they were picked up from logging stations set up on various parts of the creeks; the boats coming up to these sites and the logs being lashed to the sides and taken to the south far milling. It can be readily understood that this was a slow and tedious method of transport. The timber cut here by the Stewart Bros. was taken away in this manner.

Traces still remain of one of these stations at "Wandreys", a property now owned by Mr. D. Silcock, as also is the remains of an old cage dip; these dips were the first type used when ticks made their inroads into this country. The cage was just large enough to hold one beast, which was then lowered into the dip, the beast submerged and lifted up again and released. This method was very slow and was soon replaced by the plunge type dip still used extensively today.

Hundreds of head of cattle were slaughtered and boiled down at Skyrings boiling down works for tallow from the surrounding stations as well as their own. The Boiling Down crossing, one mile up Baffle Creek from the junction still remains as a reminder today of those days when the weary stockman from the outstations cracked his whip and urged his mob of cattle down the banks, which still bear witness of the hundreds of hooves that wore them down almost ninety years ago, and across the shallow waters of the Baffle, and on down to the Boiling Down Works for slaughtering for tallow. We are told the tallow was put into casks and taken south in Skyring's boat, the "Wywoom", and later exported overseas. Later Skyrings bought another boat, the ?.....?. The offal from the works was used to feed pigs which they kept on an island in the creek, and which to this day bears the name on the map of Pig Island. After the establishment of the sawmill the soft woods cut were rafted down the creek on the tide and an eye-witness to these days told us that there was often up to three hundred logs in one raft. The hard woods were hauled by bullock team to the mill. Mr. F.H.Wills, one of our earliest pioneers, was employed by Skyrings as a teamster. In some areas the deep ruts cut by the shining waggon wheels as the

bullocks hauled their heavy loads to the mill over miles of wild country, across creeks, and through ground often softened by rains, are still evident.

The Wills family — a name associated with the early pioneering days of this district — came to Baffle Creek in 1889. Mr. and Mrs. F. Wills set out on horseback from Gayndah to ride to "Warra" Station outside Miriam Vale, a distance of about 120 miles. Their six weeks old baby was carried on a pillow on the saddle in front of Mrs. Wills, and their son Bert, then three years old ( a well known pioneer of the Rosedale, district who passed away last year) rode with his father. On the trek many a friendly hand was extended to them. One lady gave them a dozen hard-boiled eggs to munch on the way, and as Mrs. Wills milk supply lessened she mixed up the egg yolk in her mouth to a thin paste and used that to supplement the baby's diet. From "Warra" Mr. Wills came to Baffle Creek, where he was employed as a teamster for Skyrings mill. Cottages were scattered throughout their selection, and many of their employees and early timbergetters lived in these, as this was a compulsory clause in the tenure of the land. Soon quite a settlement grew up round Skyrings Boiling Down Works and many of those early selectors got their supplies from them.

One of Mr. C. Skyring's hobbies was the rearing of blood horses, and it was these horses which were used for a mercy dash to take a badly scalded child of theirs for medical attention. A change of horses was arranged for, but in spite of all these efforts the child died at North Bundaberg. In those days they must have had many anxious moments, so helpless in the face of serious illness, as they carved their future in this remote country.

In 1891 Mrs. Wills and the children returned to Maryborough in the "Wywoom", one of Skyring's boats. When they were in sight of Burnett Heads lighthouse a terrible storm blew up. The waves broke right over the boat, and the captain pushed Mrs. Wills and the children into his cabin and slammed the door to save them being swept overboard. When dawn broke they found themselves, with both masts broken, back at Baffle Heads. Eventually the boat made Bundaberg and they proceeded by train to Maryborough. Returning, Mrs. Wills and family came from Bundaberg by spring cart, the children being lashed in the back for safety. This took three days as much of the journey was through thickly timbered country.

It was not until 1895 that the first steam train pulled into Rosedale, and for some time there were two trains a week from the South. It was two years later before the line was completed through to Gladstone. With the line came the first butcher shop in Rosedale, owned by Mr. Leabon.

The year 1896 saw the closure of Skyring's mill and boiling down works, and the property was then taken over by Taunton Pastoral Co. This company brought with them a number of Chinese, who were employed in clearing hundreds of acres of land for grazing. The present selection known as Rose Farm was one of these areas.

With the closure of the sawmill Mr. Wills tendered for and was granted the mail contract, which he held for almost nine years, from Rosedale, across the Boiling Down Crossing on Baffle Creek, through Taunton and up to Greenvale, later extending on to Rodds Bay and back through Rosedale Cattle Station. He and his son, who often did the run for him, had resting camps set up along the route, where they kept provisions and a change of horses. as the round trip took them six days.

The year 1901 started what the early pioneers described as a "Ghastly drought". All through this year there were only a few showers, and on into 1902 when not one drop of rain fell for nine months. Never before, had white men known this area to be so parched. Cattle died by the hundreds around the few dried up water holes. We are told that even the big lagoon at Rosedale Cattle Station went dry, and the only fresh water left in the entire area was at the lagoon on Reserve 9. Parish of Tottenham, behind where Mr. M. Lloyd-Jones now lives, and to this lagoon the settlers came for miles with casks on dray and slides to take home drinking water. It was from here that Skyrings obtained their water for the early days of their works, the water being pumped into a timbered trench and gravitated to the river, where it ran into tanks which they had on punts for conveying up and down the creek.

The first real relief came with a storm near Christmas, 1902. The untold joy that this brought to these hungry and despondent families, as they heard the storm break overhead, could never put into words.

Unhappily their joys were short lived, for the beginning of 1903 saw a terrific flood, which settlers tell rose to five feet below the mark left by that of 1875, which seems to be the biggest flood Baffle Creek has ever known. We are told of a mark on a tree left by this flood, which was five feet above the level of the house top lived in by Mr. C. Neilsen (on the property owned by Mr. P. Mollenhagan). No lives were lost in the 1903 flood, but a number of rescues of marooned settlers took place.

Following this flood the Wills family selected land and moved into a house built by Mr. Hegg, of Bundaberg, for £5. This was on the banks of the Baffle, not far from the mango trees above the junction. The sisal which they planted there in these days is still visible. Soon other selectors followed, amongst them were Dable, Hales, Pittock, two Olsens and others on the northern side of the creek. Most of these families had been engaged in work in connection with the railway line, and when the link through to Rosedale was completed, they selected land in the area.

The year 1906 saw the first inroads of the new immigration settlement here, when Mr. A. Josefski and family came from their cane farm near Gin Gin. With them they brought their equipment in a waggon pulled by six horses, while the family and their personal belongings came by dray. They were joined by the Beutel family, who had come all the way from Taraiiwa?

by horse and waggon to take up land in this newly opened area. It was a wild, desolate part of the country simply held under occupation as grazing selections, and upon which no habitation existed, the crack of the stockman's whip at mustering times, generally months apart, alone notifying the wild life of the scrubs and swamps, that human beings were encroaching on the solitude that so long had been theirs. Into this solitude came these two families. They settled on Oyster Creek. the Josefski family on Portion 28, Parish of Baffle, now owned by Mr. A. de Friez, and the Beutel family on Portion 27, Parish of Baffle, now owned by Mr. E. Hardy. Mr. E. Josefski, son of this family, told of how they came across to Berajondo and down to the banks of the Oyster to a point opposite the selection of Mr. Beutel. Here they boated their belongings across, but found it too deep to take the horses and waggons over, so they set out in search of shallow water, which they found a little lower down Oyster Creek, but they had to cut the banks down to allow the horses and waggons to get through. Then, with much urging from the drivers, and grinding of brakes, they finally made the other side, and set up a temporary shelter to shield them from the elements. Soon the sound of their axes could be heard rimming in the early dawn and late into the evening, as they felled trees and hewed them into slabs to build their first homes. Later Mr. Josefski built a permanent home, which was the first modern home of those times in the settlement, and is still occupied today. The roof on the bales, made of split wooden shingles, remains to this day, and serves to remind us all of the industry of those early pioneers.

The Rev. Neimeyer had an arrangement with the Queensland Government by which he brought out immigrants to Australia and settled them on the land.

It was in February, 1908, that the first group of settlers in the 9,000 ton "Orantes" arrived in Brisbane. The German Agent for Queensland met the boat and acted as interpreter. They spent the first six weeks at Hattonvale, learning something about farming from the established farmers in that area, and then were brought by train to Rosedale. With them came a sprinkling of experienced families from the south. We are told that there were thirteen or fourteen families in that first group settlement, that they arrived at Baffle Creek on March 25th, 1908, and after alighting from the train they had to trudge out from Rosedale, a distance of ten miles, the women and children, the aged and the young alike. Mr. F. Wills extended a friendly hand to them on their arrival at the Creek, making them a cup of tea, and later going into Rosedale with his waggon for the belongings they had not been able to carry out with them. Late in the afternoon these people were boated across the creek and improvised shelters erected for the night. Mr. Josefski and Mr. Beutel had a small punt made about 7' x 8' on which they brought the belongings across for them the following day.

They had to wait over six months for their selections and camped on what is now known as Wartburg or Waiting Hill — they sheltered under rough stringy bark huts. These families, fresh from the cities of Europe, endured incredible hardships. Mrs. Wills taught the women folk how to bake their own bread. The independence of these women can be measured by the fact

that on their way they all gathered wood for her fire — not a big payment perhaps, but all they could give — all they had to give. and who can give more ?.

Afterwards, Mr. Richter, one of the immigrants, built their first oven in which to bake their own bread, by hollowing out an ant nest, and in this the women folk did all their baking for some time. In the beginning they were using the river water for drinking. etc., but after a few weeks they noticed it developing a strange flavour. What they had not realised was that it had been fresh when they arrived and gradually became salt. Soon they were forced to go over the creek to Mr. Wills for fresh water, and it was while doing this that one little **\*\* boy**, a son of the Scherers, was drowned. He slipped off the edge of the small punt they were using, and his body was not recovered for some days. All that remains today to tell of this, the first tragedy to strike the settlement, is a little wooden cross with a beautiful wattle tree growing up beside it, in a hollow behind the hill where these gallant people fought against such odds. Mr. Wills started them off with a goat herd, from which they were able to get a little milk for the young ones, and as time went by and the herd grew, they were able to slaughter some for meat. The goats all had to be yarded at night to keep them from the dingoes which prowled round in packs. As the months went by their meagre rations started to dwindle, and some of the food they had brought with them from Germany became infected with weavels and went bad. They felt the pains of hunger, and then the younger men amongst them went off in search of work elsewhere to earn money. Two of the older men, Mr. G. Plotzki and Mr. Richter, remained behind to take care of the women and children. Many were the trials and tribulations of these people, but they battled on, and came to know and love the beauties of their adopted land. Months went by, until one day their selections were allotted to them by the block numbers being put in a hat, and each drew for his block.

Somewhere out in that wilderness, midst all the timber and swamps, was one single tree with their block number cut into its trunk, and many and varied are the stories of the efforts to locate their promised land. Some were fortunate, some unfortunate, on some there was water, and others had nothing, not even land on which they could dig a hole, as some of these blocks were nothing but rocks. As can be readily understood, a few that could afford it moved elsewhere to seek their fortune.

The women and children had to toil beside their menfolk to carve their future in this vast new land. All their provisions had to be brought out from Rosedale, and the womenfolk with their little ones trudging beside them had to go into Rosedale and back again. a distance of up to thirty-six miles. The men could not afford the time as they were fully engaged trying to make a start, and when it was necessary to bring out heavy supplies such as flour, etc, a waggon used to be sent in, but then the men had to work in return for payment, so this was only done when absolutely necessary. The women carried their meagre rations home -- which consisted mostly of rice and treacle — on their backs. The bread they made themselves of course. and the delicacy of kangaroo tail soup they found fifty years before the Americans.

**\*\* Noted in margin - Egan Scherer**



Records show us that the first baby born on Baffle Creek was Loby Plotzki on 2nd September, 1908.

**\*\* Hans Ernest Scherer - was born 21-6-1908**

The second group of settlers arrived in 1909, and in this year the Rev. Niemeyer arranged with Burkes Ltd. to bring a steamer up to take their produce away. This was a marked step forward for the settlers, as up till then transport of their produce was a major problem, which had to be carted to Rose-dale and then freighted to the south. The steamer came up as far as the depth of water permitted and the farmers had to carry their maize (this was practically the only crop grown at this time) to this spot, often staying with it up to two days till the boat arrived.

A hoe was the only planter they owned at first, and this was a slow and tedious method of planting their crops, but a little later some settlers bought the walking-stick type planter, which to them meant quicker planting and so a bigger return.

As time went by more and more of the settlers could afford a horse and plough, and many of the men on the lower settle-ment, referred to as Gosen 2, were taught to plow by a woman. Mrs. Bendall, who had previously been farming in the southern part of the State. The upper settlement at Oyster Creek was referred to as Gosen 1. However, the significance of these terms is still shrouded in mystery.

The entire family toiled together throughout the day, and at night families would gather together for a sing-song. With them they had brought from their homeland their love of simple music, and as they sang they sat and shelled corn till their fingers, covered with blisters, could not toil any more. The first "mechanical" corn sheller, made by Mr. H. Gieving, senr., consisted of a kerosene case with a hole at one end and handle to turn at the other end.

One of the early settlers, Mr. G. Plotzki, could play a zither, and from this small beginning and the enthusiasm of the people grew a most beautiful string band fit to play in any city. It was later reformed as the Bundaberg String Band and played over the air on a number of occasions. Prior to their string band, they made their music by blowing bottles, and rubbing a broom stick over the roughly hewn floor — to us today it may sound very simple, but to them it was diversions from the toils of the day.

Towards the end of 1909 the Rosedale Progress Association contacted Mr. Albert Kleinschmidt, Senr., at Beenleigh, and it was through this that he decided to bring his sugar mill to Baffle Creek and form a company to be known as the Baffle Creek Sugar and Trading Company.

In 1911 Mr. Albert Kleinschmidt, senr., arranged the first naturalisation ceremony, which was held at the Rosedale Hotel.

The mill was brought up from Beenleigh by the "Adonis", early in 1910, and unloaded at the mill site. Key men came up by train and soon work was started for the foundations of the

mill. The first building erected was what is today used as the ferryman's residence, and from this it grew to quite a flourishing little township, with a butcher shop, general store, and numerous houses, together with the sugar mill and barracks and sawmill. T. Gyentner was the first storekeeper and Mr. Berger the first butcher. The farmers were encouraged to plant cane, and the first crushing, though only small, was in 1911.

Cane derricks were erected along the creek, and many gaunt posts still remain today as witness of the craft that plied their way up and down the river loaded with sugar. The cane was collected from these derricks and taken by punts to the mill, where it was milled into raw sugar and again taken down to the deeper water by punts and hoisted on to the sugar boats, the "Porpoise" and "Adonis" for transport to the south. Many heaps of ballast unloaded by these sugar boats before they took on their load of sugar still remain in the lower reaches of the river, and are visible on the ebb tide.

With the coming of the sugar mill came further progress in the district. In 1911 the first school was opened at Flinders, and Miss Mischke was the first teacher. Once a week, on Saturdays, she used to go up to the Top Settlement and hold school in the Apostolic Church for the children of that settlement, till in 1912 the Oyster Creek School was opened and Mr. Gelhar was the first teacher. This school served the Top Settlement for a number of years until, owing to insufficient members, it was closed in the early years of World War II. The school has since been removed and is now erected at Tottenham and is known as the Baffle Creek State School. Shortly after the mill was working a move was made to establish a school in the locality, and Mr. A. Kleinschmidt approached the Department to have the school named Wartburg State School to perpetuate the memory of the early days of the district and the hardships experienced by those early pioneers. Perhaps, we can say that in some way Wartburg School is a monument to our past, and may we of the present, by our loyalty and pride, support and foster it to our utmost. The land was granted to the Education Department by the Company and the school was built by the mill carpenter, Mr. A. Lorsche. It was opened in August, 1913, with an enrolment of twenty-five. Their names were: Girls: Ellen Wendland, Louisa Odorski, Gertrude Kleinschmidt, Helen Odorski, Rosie Cross, Margaret Cross, Ruby Beutel, Anna Dangeleit and Violet Cross. Boys: Harry Wendland, Eric Otto, Enoch Josefski, Herman Otto, Henry Kreuziger, Ferdinand Kleinschmidt, Willie Wendland, Fritz Josefski, Eddie Wendland, Alf Wendland, Walter Finger, Walter Beutel, Adiel Wendland, John Josefski, Willie Cross and Herman Dangeleit

The first teacher appointed was Mr. A. McDonald. Of the pupils enrolled about thirty per cent. of them had a workable knowledge of English, and some of the pupils had to act as interpreters. It would be readily understood that progress would be slow in those early months. One red letter day, both for the pupils and relatives, was a wonderful picnic at The Heads, when all were transported by mill boats or private craft, and everything that could be done to gladden the hearts of the children was done. The photo of the first roll call that was unveiled in the school on 3rd August, 1963, was actually

taken on this picnic. Since those days the school has passed through, as do most schools, the threat of closure through accommodation difficulties for the teacher, through the triumph of victories on the sporting field, and the feelings that only come with the fulfilment of a job well done; till today it is possibly one of the best equipped one-teacher schools in the area, and has this year been granted the privilege of an extended Form VIII under the new 1963-64 syllabus.

Disaster struck the district in 1913 when in January of that year recordings taken at the mill site showed that 73 inches of rain fell in a week, 68 inches of this in three days. The rise in the river was so rapid that it could be seen with the eye. Great damage was done to the cane and other crops, and a number of cattle lost. The mill lost two punts, which were later replaced by two new ones built by Mr. Hebe, each to carry 35 tons.

This flood also took toll of one little life. The Hebe family, who had to move out of their home as the water rose, went into one of the mill boats, the "Bretheart", which had been tied to a dead tree. Later, with the force of water the tree fell across the bow of the boat. However, most of them escaped by clinging to the tree as the swirling flood waters carried them along, but one little girl was trapped in the cabin and her body was recovered the next day under twenty feet of water. Mr. Munckton, who was camped nearby the Hebes, heard their calls for help, and a rescue team headed by the late J. Silcock manned a small motor boat and worked their way along, guided by their cries. It was a hazardous task in complete darkness midst the thick timber and swirling waters, and it was over three hours before the family were taken to the cook house where they were cared for.

Until 1915 there had been a ferry running at the junction, but when, and where this ferry came from is one of our unsolved mysteries, some tell of the Government putting it there and wanting the immigrants to pay £300 towards it, some tell that it was put there by Christensens Pty. Ltd. of Bundaberg for the convenience of those early settlers, while others think it was built by local men. It was in this year that the sugar mill undertook to look after the ferry, and a new one was built by their shipwright, Mr. M. Hebe, and it was put into commission at the site where the ferry now runs.

The closure of the mill in 1918, when the company went into liquidation, was a severe blow to the district, as it had given to the settlers a market for their produce, but, undaunted, they turned their hands to other fields. The mill was broken up and sold piece-meal to different interested parties. Many of the punts were bought by local settlers, who broke them up for various building jobs on their farms.

About this time the Miriam Vale Shire Council took over the ferry, and appointed a ferryman under contract and he retained the tolls he collected from this time on the ferry has been under the control of the Council.

The settlers then had to turn to some other methods of livelihood, as with no local mill, transport costs were too great to convey their cane to Bundaberg. It was to dairying they

turned, which is still one of the main industries carried on today. The first cream carter was Mr. C. Plotzki. who carted it with two horses and a German waggon, leaving at 7 a.m. in the morning and not getting home till 9 p.m. at night,

**\*\* Date change 1916**

In 19?? Mr. A. Kleinschmidt selected "Blackwater" and decided to grow bananas. Soon a large area was planted up and in 1932, 700 tons were freighted from the Rosedale railway station and the railway freight and charges amounted to over £1.106. Later, "Deepwater" was opened up and there fruit was grown also, both of these areas now being used for peanut growing. We cannot mention "Deepwater" without some mention of the beauty spot of Wreck Rock, and the historical anchor partly buried in the sand about a mile up the beach from the Rocks. This anchor has been there as long as white man has known, and to date we have not been able to establish the boat from which it came. It is about a foot wide at the fluke, and would probably measure six feet across from one fluke to the other. One fluke is buried, and varying amounts of the anchor are visible according to the build up of sand. Perhaps, one day this riddle may be solved - who knows what it may be?

The years rolled by with their joys and their sorrows. The war years saw many hardships, with loved ones far away, a shortage of labour and essential materials. It, was during this time that Mr. W. Rhodmann, being a man with great initiative, when millet brooms were in short supply, sat and took one to pieces to see how it was made. He decided he could manage it, grew his own millet, and he and his family established a broom making factory. At first they did all the work by hand, but as time went on Mr. Rhodmann purchased machinery, and soon his brooms were known throughout the State.

Perhaps here I may be permitted to add boat building. The Olsen family have between them built two boats, and at present have two on the slip. The "Jenny Ann" owned and built by Mr. and Mrs. Herb. Olsen, is a well known boat in the prawning industry. and was one of the fleet selected to go to The Gulf.

Today, in 1963, it is a flourishing district, engaged mainly in dairying, peanut growing and cattle, far removed from the incredible hardships of our forefathers. We enjoy the amenities of modern times, our own lighting plants, cars, and wireless sets to bring us in close contact with happenings on the other side of the world.

"We are now passing through the present, which is ours. to the unknown future, of which we are the trustees."

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