

# William & Thomasina Sinclair

## "Black Belt" Pioneer Defeats Bear

William Sinclair (snr) and his wife Thomasina (nee Little) left Glasgow Scotland on Mar 4 1886 bound for Brisbane Australia. Accompanying them on the journey was Uncle Simon Sinclair. They came by the steamship Duke of Sutherland, arriving in Brisbane on May 7 1886. William and Thomasina were married on Feb 4 1886 one month before they embarked on their journey to Australia. William was about 26 yo and Thomasina only 21. This was the beginning of a new life in a new country. They selected land on the Blackall Range in 1886-9. William selected Portion 33V 160 acres, (Agricultural Farm) AF 476 and Simon; Portion 38V 160 acres AF 535, Parish of Bribie, on the coastal side of the now Maleny Montville Rd. Sinclairs Lane is named after the pioneer family. Sadly Simon was killed whilst felling a tree on his property on Jan 4 1894 and was buried on the property, later to be named "Alabama". William and Thomasina were to have 11 children. Sadly twins died at birth and are buried on the property. William was known as the "strongest man on the range" and could put a four bushel bag of corn (over 100 kilos) under each arm and carry them to his wagon. One day a travelling circus came to Landsborough. William agreed to wrestle a bear and to the amazement of the circus people he defeated the bear. Being a man of very few words, after he died the family found a "Black Belt" he won in Cumberland for wrestling. The strong man who "defeated the bear" died age 67 on Oct 19 1927. Thomasina his wife died age 70 on 13 Aug 1935. They are buried side by side in Mooloolah cemetery, a memorial to the strength and determination of our pioneers.

Bill Johnson



William Sinclair



William & Thomasina's home & milking herd on Sinclair Lane

## Bill and the Bear

By Cloudstreet

1. Come listen now, good people here  
To a story of renown  
of the day a hundred years ago  
when the circus came to town  
Mr Wirth and all his gallant crew  
They raised the big top high  
And all the folk for miles around  
Gathered under a canvas sky

Chorus:

And were you there in the clear night air  
when William Sinclair he fought the bear  
Were you there to see William Sinclair  
When he wrestled the bear to the ground

2. There were dancing ponies and tumbling  
clowns  
The best you ever did see  
A lion tamer and a high wire act  
A girl on the flying trapeze  
There was a fat ring-master in a big top hat  
And he slashed his whip through the air  
With a roar and a growl, a cage went clang  
It was samson the mighty bear

3. He was ten feet high, he was nine feet wide  
A mountain of muscle and fur  
A mighty beast just as black as the coal  
The ground shook with his roar  
Then the man with the whip He called for  
quiet  
not a sound from those who were there  
I've a crisp ten pounds for any man here  
Who's brave enough to wrestle a bear.

4. Bill and his family had come to see the  
show  
his youngest newly born  
The strongest man to ever walk the range  
He'd carry his weight in corn  
he sized up the beast, with a glance at his wife  
he slowly raised his hand  
"I'll have a go", he heard himself say  
then up struck the band

5. Stripped to the waist, bill entered the ring  
Circling and bouncing round  
First left, then right, 'til he lunged right in  
The crowd didn't make a sound  
They twisted and they turned as they wrestled  
and they grappled  
At the skin and the muscle and the hair  
With a mighty roar, Bill threw Samson down  
He raised his fist in the air

6. You've never heard a roar quite like it  
The shouts split the midnight air  
Bill was raised above all the heads of the  
crowd  
to the cheers of everyone there  
And to this day, when you see the name  
of the famous Bill Sinclair  
Raise your glass and drink to the health  
Of the only man to ever beat the bear.

The true story of a Glaswegian emigrant to  
Australia, William Sinclair, who became  
famous in the Maleny District of South-East  
Queensland for defeating a bear in a wrestling  
match when a circus visited Landsborough in  
the early 20th Century.

This track from [cloudstreet's \*Circus of Desires\*](#)  
album.

This post is dedicated to Bill's grandson, Leslie  
Norman ("Nugget") Sinclair who died at the  
age of 92 on 26 August, 2011.