

## THE WEBB FAMILY HISTORY

This is an attempt to gather together all the facts and some of the details that have been unearthed about the Webb family. To save a lot of time and explanation of where and how the information has been gathered it is to be understood that, unless otherwise stated, everything given in this account has been authenticated and, in the case of births, deaths and marriages, documents have been obtained or have been sighted to provide the information set down.

The story begins with Thomas Webb, a sawyer, on Waiheke Island who is known to have died there on 2nd December 1855 from exhaustion after getting ashore from a boating accident and nearly drowning. His son Robert gave evidence at the inquest and mentioned that his father, on reaching the shore, called for his son and that there was a younger brother on, the shore at the time.

These other two brothers were James, the eldest, born 20th October 1839, and Thomas, the youngest, born 10th September 1843. Robert was born 25th September, 1841.

For a long time the identity of Thomas Webb's Maori wife remained a mystery but after a lot of investigation and a great deal of determination the mystery was solved. At a hearing of the Maori Land Court in 1914, Thomas Webb, the youngest of the three brothers stated, " I knew my mother, Wehi Pokai. She was a full sister of Aperahama Pokai and Hori Rakena Pokai. My mother lived at Hurihi. Ngata Paoa was the tribe there. I was about four or five when my mother died. My mother died at Waiheke and is buried at Huruhi. " Another witness stated that " Wehi married a European and died at Waiheke. The European was drowned at Waiheke. " Yet another witness stated, " I knew Aperahama Pokai. He had a brother and a sister, Wehi and Hori. Wehi married Tame Wepu ( a European ). "So this evidence gave the information that had been so long in coming to light.

The history of the three boys is fairly well documented, particularly as far as James and Thomas are concerned. Robert's line has been more difficult to trace. He left Waiheke and went to Henderson's Mill where he married Mary Ann Glenn in 1862, on 25th December. They went to the Coromandel area and lived there for many years. Robert died on 26th August, 1908, aged 66, and left five sons and three daughters. His wife Mary Anne, died 25th September 1913.

Thomas left Waiheke and spent some time in Australia before returning and also going to the Coromandel area. He married rather late in life, aged 39, firstly to a widow, Amelia Flynn, who died eight years later having had no family. He married a second time, to a young woman named Clarissa Maria Le Manquais whose family came from Akaroa and was of Channel Island descent. He died at Tairua in 1915 aged 73. Thomas and Clarissa had nine children, eight girls and one boy, also called Thomas, but he died unmarried and so the name of Webb died out from this branch of the family. It is from their grand-daughter, Clarissa O'Neill ( known as Clare ) that we have been able to obtain a lot of information and who has been such a tremendous help in every way.

Thomas and Robert were bushmen in the Coromandel area and Webb's Creek and Webb's Staircase in the Kaueranga Valley, Thames, are named after them.

James appears to have remained on Waiheke Island and on the 9th of April 1860, he married Louisa Merrick, also of Waiheke. Louisa was born on 10th August, 1842, in New Holland, the daughter of Isaac and Elisabeth Merrick. Isaac and Elisabeth were married in England in 1823 when they were both 18 years old. He was a coal-miner and she was a mantua-maker ( which was a kind of dress-maker ).

We have copies of the entries in their family bible and know that they had twenty children although not many of them survived. Seven died in England, one died at sea on the way to Australia, one died in Sydney, and five others died later in New Zealand ( three of them in one week on Waiheke of typhoid ). Only three children survived - Louisa, Joseph and Jacob though we later found out that young Isaac, who was reported in the bible as " going away " was married in Onehunga.

Isaac Merrick was a real pioneer in this country and a man of many parts. He was instrumental in starting the manganese mining on Waiheke and copper mining on other islands in the Gulf and also did some farming on the North Shore where the Harbour Bridge Toll Plaza was situated. It is a pity that his endeavours have met with so little recognition.

James and Louisa Webb had four children - James, born on 20th May, 1860; Elizabeth, born on 10th August 1862; Thomas, born on 1st January 1864; and Mary Louisa, born on 27th April 1865. James was a sawyer, or bushman like his father and brothers and on the 11th April 1865, was killed by a tree falling on him, just a couple of weeks before the birth of his youngest child, Mary Louisa. Great difficulty was experienced in tracing the official record of his death. It is recorded in both the Cole and the Merrick family bibles but it was only after many strenuous

efforts and a considerable amount of searching that the official registration of his death was found by Clare O'Neill. The problem was caused by his name being given as " Samuel " and not " James ". All the other details are correct - the time, the place, and the cause of death, - just the Christian name is wrong.

Of the four children born to James and Louisa the most information to hand is about James, the first-born. Elizabeth married a Captain Harnden and the only information we have about Thomas is that he was a steward on ships plying to Australia. Mary Louisa died on 10th December, 1884, aged 19 years at Willow Street, Auckland.

After the death of James on Waiheke, Louisa married John Cole who is said to have been a great friend of James. They were married on 2nd December, 1867 at St. Pauls and they had seven children, one of whom was Edward Cole, born 11th May 1878. The Webb children of Louisa's first marriage and the Cole children of her second were thus brought up together and all the boys joined the Devonport Naval Volunteers.

Louisa's eldest son, James, married Isabella Kerr on 15th April 1889, and they had four children, Thomas Sydney Samuel, born 1891; Ivy Louisa, born 1893; Percival James, born 18th September 1895; and Margarita Roberta Maybelle, born 1896. James died on 25th May 1899, in the Auckland Hospital, from typhoid fever and was given a tremendous funeral by the members of the Devonport Naval Volunteers, complete with the coffin being borne on a gun-carriage, a band, and a huge turn out of mourners. There was also a report of the funeral in the newspaper.

After the death of her husband Isabella married his half-brother, Edward Cole ( son of Louisa and John Cole ), and they had one child, Daphne. Of the four children that James and Isabella had the one we know most about is Percival James who was only forty years old when his father died. He went on to marry Mary Juanita Bruford and they had seven children.

Athol James Webb, June, 1984.

### Speculations :

We have not as yet, been able to find out where Thomas Webb came from or how he got to Waiheke Island but in following certain leads we have found a family in Australia that could just possibly be the right one.

There is a record of a James Webb, sawyer, being transported from Wiltshire, England, after being convicted of stealing a horse and saddle from one Richard Balding. He pleaded not guilty but was sentenced to death - this was commuted to transportation for life. This was in 1819, at the Easter Assizes in Berkshire.

He arrived in Australia in 1819 on the Malibar I and his description is given as :- 5' tall, fair, pale complexion, light brown hair, blue eyes, aged 40, occupation sawyer.

On 18 August 1828, he was granted his " Ticket of Leave " and allowed to remain in the district of Sydney.

In 1823 his family came out to him on the Jupiter. This comprised his wife, Grace, his sons Thomas and Robert and his daughter Mary. Thomas was born in 1811 which makes his age right for the Thomas Webb on Waiheke Island. Grace died in Sydney, in 1830, aged 50 and James died soon after in 1831, aged 53.

There is no proof that this is the family of Thomas , father of James, Robert and Thomas, but there is every possibility that it is.

Wehi Pokai was the daughter of Hori Pokai who was captured at the Battle of Totara Pa in 1821 and taken up north where he grew to manhood and raised a family. When we first started researching the family history we found the record of a Thomas Webb who was married to Tomo at Waimate North in 1839 by the Rev. Richard Taylor but could find nothing more about them. Here we have the possibility of Wehi being born up north - could she be Tomo under another name ? Perhaps we shall never know.

## THE WEBB FAMILY HISTORY II

The first *Webb Family History* was written 1984 by Athol Webb with much assistance from Claire O'Neill. It concluded with a page headed *Speculations*. This differentiation was made because all the statements made in the main part of the story could be authenticated with documentary proof whereas the rest of the story could not. Many who read the story at that time have probably wondered whether these speculations have since been proved or disproved and whether any new facts have come to light. In these pages we will try to answer these questions.

Sad to say, Athol (full name Athol James Blake Bruford Webb) died in 1984. For this reason we now have different scribes.

It will be remembered that the Thomas Webb who came to New Zealand (since there were more than one Thomas Webbs let us call him Thomas I), married a Maori woman, settled on Waiheke Island, and had three sons, James, Robert and Thomas (who we will call Thomas II). Athol was descended from James and so quite naturally his account told us most about James' early descendants. We do not have anything to add to Athol's story about James and his family.

Claire is a granddaughter of Thomas II. She contributed many of the facts about him to the story and has continued her research into the family. In recent years she has been joined by descendants of the second son, Robert, - Frank Webb, until his untimely death, and more recently, by Robert Webb (of Ruakaka) and by Don Hayward.

Let us begin with the "Speculations." Athol wrote : "There is no proof that this is the family of Thomas, father of James, Robert and Thomas, but there is every possibility that it is." There is still no documentary proof that the Thomas I was the son of James Webb the convict. However, there are several things which give confidence to this conclusion. Firstly, the naming of the children is consistent with the traditions of the day. In those days it was customary to name the eldest son after his paternal grandfather, and the second son after his eldest paternal uncle. Secondly, many Webb descendants can remember being told of the family's unsuccessful claim to the title of land where the Sydney Post Office was later built. On a visit to Sydney, Claire obtained copies of title documents showing that a James Webb purchased land in Fort Street, Sydney in May 1828. In May or June of 1831, ie. shortly after the death of James the ex convict, this same land was sold by a Thomas Webb. Presumably Thomas I had inherited this land on the death of his father. We also know that Thomas II spent some years in Australia, we believe for the purpose of persuing this claim.

While in Sydney, Claire also attempted to confirm her theory that Thomas I could have come to New Zealand with the Rev. Samuel Marsden on his final voyage in 1836. If he had indeed been engaged by Marsden then there could well be records among Marsden's papers which are held in the National Museum, Sydney. Unfortunately, Claire's objectives were not deemed sufficiently academic to warrant being given permission to inspect these old papers. It could well be that Thomas I was brought to New Zealand by Marsden because of his skills with wood. He is known to have possessed some carpentry tools because these were passed down to descendants of his youngest son Thomas II (1843 - 1915) and were later willed into the Lidgard family, but their whereabouts are not now known to us.

Claire also travelled to England in 1989 in search of more details about James and Grace. Unfortunately the Australian records do not give Grace's single name but Claire found the record of the marriage of a James Webb to a Grace Skippager in Wiltshire in 1801 which could be the correct one. James was a sawyer and was born in the Parish of Bromham, Wilts. She also discovered that James was otherwise known as James Kenton and was charged with stealing a horse and saddle from a Richard Balding in the Parish of Padworth, Berks. at the Berkshire Assizes on 16 July 1817. Claire visited the old Anglican Church in Padworth (which was founded in 1297 or earlier) and found the graves of Richard Balding and his wife.

James was found guilty and was sentenced to death on 1 March 1819 but this sentence was immediately reprieved and changed to "Transportation for Life". At some stage James escaped from custody and the gaoler petitioned the court to recover his expenses of £13 19s 0 for his recapture. Before being transported to Australia James was imprisoned on the "Woolwich", one of several hulks moored in the Thames and used at this time for prisoners awaiting transportation.

One of the puzzles she hoped to solve was : "How was Grace able to support three children for six years and then pay for the passage of them all to Australia?" The most likely answer is that she received support from her Parish Church. If this is correct then there could well be details in a Parish Register. If these do exist, then the Wiltshire County Record Office in Salisbury would be the most likely place to find them. Unfortunately Claire ran out of time and was unable to visit Salisbury.

The other speculation concerned Thomas I's Maori wife. Their marriage took place at Waimate North on 18 November, 1839, with the consent of "her father", and the record gives her name as "Tomo". We now know that "Tomo" means "betrothed". Their first child was baptised on the same day, so in the Maori world they would already have been regarded as man and wife. This child was born on 29 January, 1839, to "Thomas and Tomo", and was named William in the baptismal record. So was William subsequently known as James? We presume so.

The first break-through had come when Clare found the records of the Native Land Court mentioned in Athol's story. These told us that Thomas I, known to the Maoris as Tame Wepu, was married to Wehi who was a sister of Aperamaha and Hori Pokai, the children of Te Ruinga Hori Pokai, a Ngati Paoa chief, and Waihora, his wife. Also given in evidence were the facts that

Wehi lived at Hurihi, Waiheke Island and died when Thomas II was 4 or 5 years old and that as well as James, Robert and Thomas there was a daughter whose name was not recorded (and about whom nothing is known to us). Thomas II died while he was still pursuing these claims and his papers were either stolen or buried with him, a practice which is still common among the Maori even to this day.

The second break-through came when Clare met with Tai Turoa of Paeroa. He knew the oral history and was able to provide the missing information which has allowed the full story to be told at last.

Wehi was murdered on Waiheke in October 1843, in accordance with an old Maori custom. She had been a slave to the wife of a chief named Kupenga. When Kupenga's wife died Wehi was killed so that she could wait on her in the next world. A newspaper report in the *Southern Cross* gives the slave's name as "Emuka", but we feel confident that this was Wehi because of the timing of this incident, and the fact that oral history passed down through the different sides of the family tells that Thomas I's wife was a princess, (ie. the daughter of a chief) and that she was shot and killed on Waiheke according to some Maori tradition. It is also quite likely that Kupenga's wife would have given her slave a "pet" name - this was a common practice.

Thomas II was only about a month old when his mother was killed and he was nursed by Puhipui Puketapu, Wehi's aunt. (This has led to some confusion as we shall see later because it led to his being known among Maori people as Tame Puketapu.) So was Thomas II brought up apart from his father and his two older brothers? The answer must be no! How else could he have learnt about the land in Sydney other than from his father and his two brothers? (Robert's descendants also knew of it.). Then, after James' early death in 1865, Thomas II goes to Sydney, presumably with some confidence about reclaiming ownership of this land. But he was unsuccessful. So were the Webbs swindled out of ownership of this land? We will never know.

A whakapapa for Thomas II was prepared some years ago by George Howe, a family friend, but at that time it was thought Thomas II was the son of Te Puketapu and Pupuhi Pokai and it was not until Claire met with Tai Turoa that his correct parentage was known.

Hori Pokai's father (Te Uringa Hori Pokai), together with two brothers and a sister (who must have been Puhipuhi), were captured by the Ngapuhi at the battle of Totara Pa in 1821, and taken to the Bay of Islands area as slaves where the younger Hori was born about 1831. When Patuone and Tamata Wakanene became Christians about 1840, the family were released and they returned to their old home, Waiheke Island. Young Hori's face was tattooed in a way which indicated he had been a slave. When he died in 1901 he was one of the last tattooed Maori in the Thames district. He had been a popular subject of Mr. W. Hammond, the photographer, and also of James Goldie, who painted several portraits of him, including some as late as 1937 from earlier photographs.

Wehi's father, Te Uringa Hori Pokai, was the grandson of Te Mahia, a powerful Ngati Paoa chief. There is a story in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 33, written by George Graham, titled "Kahu-mau-roa and Te Kotuiti" which tells about these two famous war canoes of the Ngati Paoa and of the fighting between Ngati Paoa and Ngapuhi. It includes the following account : "During the raid on Hauraki, the Ngapuhi attacked Ngati Paoa at Taupo, there they killed Mahia (father of Te Waero, Haupa and Pokai). The body was cut up and hung up in a famous karaka tree; to thereby desecrate both the tree and the memory of Mahia. Hence the name of that hapu of Ngati Paoa in after time "Te Iri Karaka" or "Te Uri-Karaka", as also the name of that karaka tree "Te Raho-o-Mahia", which still grows there at Te Aute, on the Maraetai foreshore."

Another interesting discovery about the Maori side of the family is that Wehi's father, Te Ruinga Hori Pokai, was an important Maori Chief who at one time appears to have owned all of Waiheke Island and also land on the western side of the Firth of Thames. However, since the Ngati Paoa supported the Waikato tribes during the Maori Wars, almost all of these tribal lands which they had not already sold were confiscated by the Government. (For the story of the Ngati Paoa see *Report of the Waitangi Tribunal on the Waiheke Island Claim*). Te Ruinga Hori Pokai, was a signatory to the Treaty of Waitangi - he made his mark on 4th March 1840 at the signing for the Waitemata area held at Karaka Bay, Glendowie. Thus all our Webb relatives are entitled to say that they are descended from a signatory to the Treaty.

Perhaps Thomas I had arranged the purchase of some land from Hori. A member of the Phillips family had a document which had been in the family's possession for many years and appeared to be an agreement for the purchase of a block of land. Ann Nicolson (a descendant of Margaret Webb) remembers it being very faded and on very thin, badly creased paper and that the land was being exchanged for a quantity of blankets, axes and other goods. It was taken to the Auckland War Memorial Museum for authentication but, unfortunately, it was in their basement when it flooded and the document was completely ruined and no longer exists.

Incidentally, Robert Webb's third son (also named Robert), lodged a claim in the Native Land Court in 1920. This claim was successful and he obtained ownership of a block of land at Waitakaruru which he promptly sold.

We now know more about the middle son, Robert. Robert was a Mill Hand at Henderson's Mill, Henderson when he married Mary Ann Glenn. She was the daughter of Thomas Glenn, a fencible soldier born in Dunfermline, County Fife, who had been a private in the 51st. Regiment of Foot before coming to New Zealand. Mary Ann had been born at Howick in 1848, one year after her parents arrival with their two young children.

About 1867 Robert moved to Thames, working as a bushman, and in 1879 won a large contract to supply kauri logs to the Shortland Sawmilling Co. over a 14 year period. He appears to have completed this contract in about 10 years because about 1890 he moved his operations to Whitianga.



Robert and Mary had thirteen children, one of which was stillborn. Seven of these, four boys and three girls, lived to marry and raise children. The twelve live births were Thomas, born on 29 April 1865 whose first marriage to Sarah McGregor produced five children and whose second marriage to Evelyn Etheridge produced five more children; James, born on 19 August 1866 who was killed by a falling tree when aged twenty five; Annie, born on 16 July 1868 who died aged six; Margaret, born on 25 August 1870 who married George Phillips and had five children; Robert, born on 24 December 1872 who married Agnes Brady and had six children; William Glennard, born on 22 January 1875 who died aged thirteen; Frederick John, born on 2 December 1877 who drowned when aged four; Francis LeManquis, born on 24 September 1879 who married Harriet Thurlow and had four children; Henry Leonard, born on 13 June 1882 who married Mary McCammish and had two children; Ellen Louisa, born on 22 November 1867 who married Harold Saxon and had four children; Annie Elizabeth, born on 20 April 1887 who died unmarried aged twenty eight; and Walter Richard, born on 18 January 1891 who married Florence Norman and had three children.

It has been surprising to learn how many of the Webb family were employed by the Colonial Sugar Co. Thomas III, Robert's eldest son, was a contractor working at the Chelsea Refinery in the Raw Sugar Store where he employed his brothers Robert and Frank, and also his nephew, Frank Harnden. Walter, the youngest son, also worked for the Co. as a lighterman, as did his son Wally, and also Robert's son, Jim. Thomas III's brother-in-law, George Phillips, also worked at the Refinery for a short time, and so too did Thomas III's son, Jim, in later years. Thus there were Webbs working for the sugar company continuously from 1884 to at least 1949 when Jim died while still in their employ.

Thomas II was in Australia during the Maori Wars, no doubt following up his suspicion about the land where the Sydney Post Office stands. On his return to New Zealand in the late 1860s he went gold-mining at Thames and also on the west coast, South Island. Around 1880 he joined his brother Robert at Thames, felling kauri in the Kaueranga Valley. He married Amelia Flynn in 1881, and after her death in 1889 he married Clarissa LeManquis. The following year, on completion of the kauri felling contract, they went to the west coast of the South Island where Thomas became a goldminer again and then a coalminer. The first three of their ten children were born on the West Coast. Moving back to the Coromandel area about 1896, he worked again as a bushman and became a Manager for the Kauri Timber Co. at Tairua. He and his wife Clarissa also managed a boarding house at Tairua and stories are told of how on a Saturday night, the mats would be rolled up for dances to be held in the dining room, and the suppers were a great delight.

Don Hayward

Claire O'Neil

September 1998.