

OMAN George and LANNIGAN Eleanor

Royal New Zealand Fencible Corps

contributed by Judith Devaliant, author of *'Elizabeth Yates: the First Lady Mayor in the British Empire'*

George Oman was born in the north of Scotland in 1809, and spent his childhood in an area close to John O'Groats. He left home as soon as he was old enough and enlisted in the army, serving in various places around Britain. In 1838 he married **Eleanor Lannigan** at Saint Peter's Church in Athlone, Ireland. They had two daughters, **Elizabeth** and **Eleanor**. Forced to retire in 1852 because of arthritis, George left the army with five service medals and a reference as 'a very good labourer.' Seeing little chance of prosperity in Britain he decided to enlist as a Fencible soldier and seek a better future for his family in New Zealand. The Omans sailed from London on the *Berwick Castle* on 29 May 1852 with other Fencible soldiers and their families, and after an eventful voyage lasting 196 days reached Auckland on 11 December 1852. They were part of a group of 25 Fencible families assigned to the village of Onehunga where they were given a cottage and a plot of land on Selwyn Street. With no Pakeha-Maori troubles in sight, George and his fellow Fencibles were employed on public works. In 1855 he appeared on the electoral rolls as a householder and labourer. In 1860 when he completed his service he was listed as a freeholder and labourer, an important distinction. George worked steadily, lived economically and saved his money. He left his wife comfortably off when he died on 31 January 1874.

Eleanor Oman (nee Lannigan) was born in County Cork in 1814. In 1838 at the age of 24 she married **George Oman** at Saint Peter's Church in Athlone. They had two daughters, **Elizabeth** and **Eleanor**. In 1852 Eleanor accompanied her husband to New Zealand and lived with him in a Fencible cottage in Selwyn Street. Eleanor was a hard working housewife and mother, who taught her daughters the domestic arts of cooking and sewing. She survived her husband by 12 years and was buried in the cemetery at Saint Peter's Church when she died on 23 January 1886.

Daughter **Elizabeth** married **Michael Yates**, both of whom are buried in **Saint Peter's Cemetery**.

Daughter **Eleanor** married **Thomas Henshaw**, both of whom are buried in **Saint Peter's Cemetery**.