

WOOLLY James and Mary Ann

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James Woolly (b. 23 October 1805), his wife **Mary Ann** (b. 23 March 1806), and their two young children **Sarah Ann** (b. 30 June 1838) and **James Arthur** (b. 26 February 1840) left London on the privately-owned barque '*Jane*' on 28 November 1840.

After an eventful voyage, during which the barque was damaged and required extensive repair, they arrived in *Port Nicholson*, Wellington, on 24 May 1841.

After a stay of some months in Wellington, the family then sailed for Auckland. In 1842, the *Police Census* (taken annually in the early colonial days) records James and Mary Ann as living at *Official Bay* (now reclaimed land but, at the time, a bay at the lower end of what is now called *Anzac Avenue*) together with three children.

Their third child, **Thomas Cuttell**, was born 13 February 1842; James' occupation was given as an 'agriculturist', and he owned a 'wooden house.'



The next two years saw James and his family living in both Whangaroa and Kororareka (Russell) in Northland. In mid-August 1844, John Logan Campbell, returning from Russell to Auckland, brought James with him on the sailing ship '*Dolphin*'. Campbell described James as a '*very trustworthy clerk*' as he introduced him to the firm of *Brown and Campbell* as overseer of the business' clerical work when Brown departed for England. Two months later Mary Ann followed James on the ship '*Henry*' with their three children and a servant, arriving in Auckland, 12 October 1844. Twelve days later Mary Ann gave birth to their fourth child, **Eliza Cope**.

The family lived for quite some time in John Logan Campbell's *Acacia Cottage* situated in Shortland Street, next to *Brown and Campbell's* importing-exporting business; Campbell moved into a room on the second floor of the brick-store nearby and dined with the Woolly family each evening after work. According to the 1845 *Police Census*, ten people (including two servants) were then living in the cottage. (*Acacia Cottage* was later relocated to *Cornwall Park*, Epsom, where it still stands as the first and oldest wooden house in Auckland.)

A September 1845 copy of the newspaper '*New Zealander*' carried an advertisement for *depasturing* (grazing) on James' Epsom farm. The family lived either on that farm or nearby, as it is recorded that that Mary Ann gave birth to their fifth child, **Collins**, in Royal Oak, 13 October 1846. John Logan Campbell was godfather at Collins' baptism.

James managed *Brown and Campbell* whenever the partners were absent from Auckland. He was also elected treasurer of the *Mechanics Institute* (an *Institute* that provided adult education, particularly in technical subjects) being re-elected each year until his death. He was granted an *Auctioneer's License* in 1845. He continued to run *Brown and Campbell*, but from 1845 onwards his profession was recorded as 'auctioneer.' He was also involved in business for and with many of Auckland's businessmen.

James also invested in property in his own name e.g. a search through the *Lands and Deeds Office Records* indicate that he owned numerous pieces of land within the Auckland region, extending as far as *Karaka* in South Auckland. An early *Auckland Street Directory* shows James' name on a section bordering *Shortland* and *O'Connell* Streets and running almost along to *Chancery Lane* – a section from which he operated his auctioneering business.

By March 1847, James' health may have begun to deteriorate, as he made his *Last Will* on 2 March. Come 13 September 1847, he had become seriously ill and died, aged but 40 years, of a brain tumour, at Onehunga.

Death Notices were uncommon in those early days, but the following was printed in the '*New Zealander*', 18 September 1847:

James Woolly died 13th inst. At Onehunga, in his 41st year. Mr James Woolly, whose upright and benevolent character had obtained universal esteem and affection amongst those who were acquainted with him.

Mary Ann Woolly was thus widowed with five young children. James, in his *Will*, had left Mary Ann all his cattle and their increase, plus residue and personal effects; he had also instructed that several allotments of land in Auckland were not to be sold, but that she could occupy them or enjoy the rents and profits thereof. He also instructed that upon her death all these lands were to be divided equally among their five children.

Mary Ann lost no time before advertising in the 16 October 1847 edition of the '*New Zealander*' to the effect that she was opening, in *Queen Street*, Auckland, a school for young ladies that would offer education in English, French, Drawing and Music. Over the next decade she opened other similar educational establishments e.g. at *Prospect House*, Hobson Street; at the *Queen Street* residence of the late Mr Conry (who had been the solicitor who had settled James' business matters after James' death); and at *Hanover House* in Parnell.

The family was to experience another tragedy. **Thomas Cuttell Woolly**, James and Mary Ann's second son, aged 20 years, died 21 January 1863. Thomas was, at the time, a bank clerk for one of Auckland's Banks.

But two years later, **Mary Ann** herself was to die, aged 59 years. She died at her residence, Remuera, 3 July 1865, and was buried at **Saint Mark's Anglican Church Cemetery, Remuera**.

There were four children remaining at the time of her death: **Sarah Ann**, aged 27; **James Arthur**, aged 25; **Elizabeth Cope**, aged 21; and **Collins**, aged 19 years.



Footnote: the exact **burial site for James Woolly** is uncertain. He certainly died in Onehunga. His descendants certainly associate his burial with Saint Peter's Church, Onehunga, and there is within the church building a family-erected brass plaque remembering James.

- James died 13 September 1847.
- The first Anglican minister in Onehunga, **Arthur Guyon Purchas**, was ordained as a deacon in Saint Paul's Church, Auckland, **19 September 1847** and seven days later, **27 September** (i.e. 14 days after James' death), was appointed as deacon-in-charge of a brand-new parochial district including Onehunga, Epsom, Otahuhu, Waiuku and Mauku.
- The land, on which Saint Peter's Church was built and Cemetery established, was not officially handed over by the Crown to the Anglican Church until 1848

It is possible that James' body was exhumed from its original burial site and then re-buried within **Saint Peter's Cemetery** after the church was completed in June 1848.

John McAlpine

