

## BRAY Asher

not related to the Onehunga Bray family, but taken into their hearts,  
and buried in Saint Peter's Cemetery  
in the same plot as Percy Daniel Bray (see Percy's biography on this website)

the information contained in this biography comes from several sources including church records, nzhistory.govt.nz, the Bray family history 'The Bray Saga', New Zealand Herald, Auckland Star, and family researcher Alan Bray

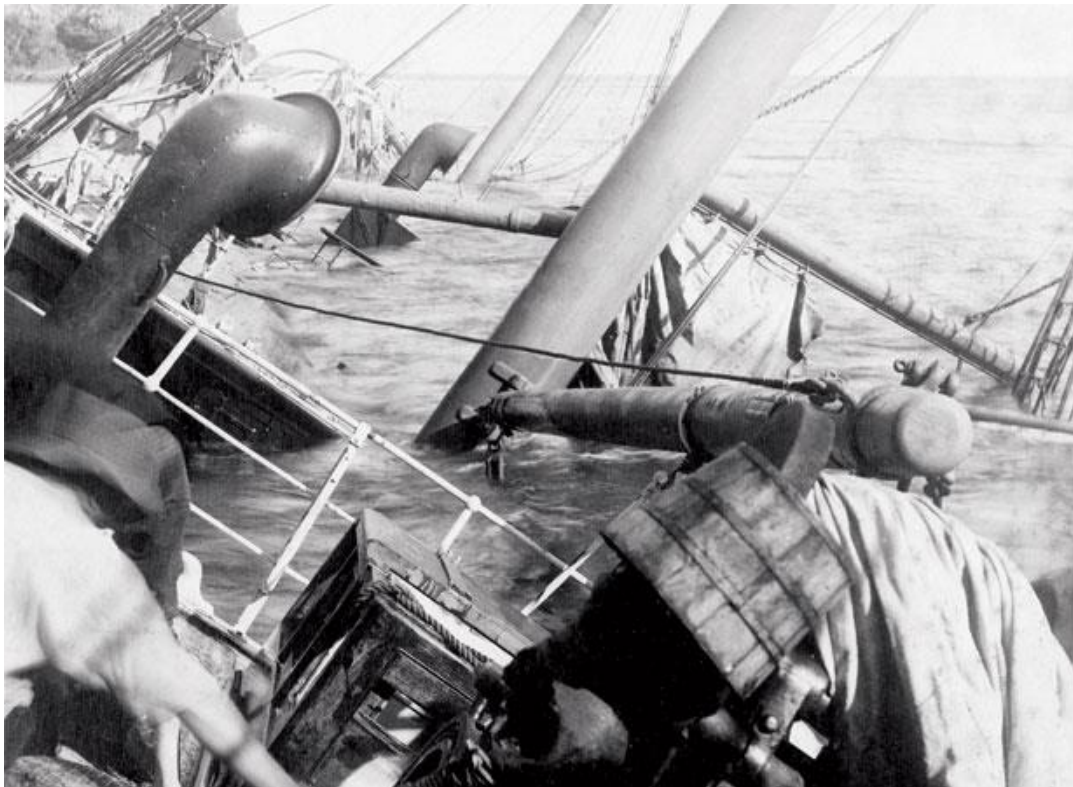
**Asher Bray**, son of Thomas Bray and Charlotte Squire Bray, was born 2 April 1870, in Concord, New South Wales, Australia. (Source: Wikitree)

**Asher** was not related to the Onehunga Bray family; but a shipwreck linked him to **Arthur Bray**, the second child of **William and Hannah Bray** of Onehunga.

**Arthur Bray**, in his twenties, was working in Australia in 1894. Writing to his Onehunga family, he indicated that he hoped to visit them in Onehunga soon.

Meanwhile disaster struck. The ship *SS Wairarapa* was wrecked on Great Barrier Island, 29 October 1894.

[nzhistory.govt.nz/ss-wairarapa-wrecked-great-barrier-island](http://nzhistory.govt.nz/ss-wairarapa-wrecked-great-barrier-island)  
gives the following account of that disaster:



Wreck of the Wairarapa, 1894 (Alexander Turnbull Library, PA1-o-287-01)

*It remains the third deadliest shipwreck ever in New Zealand waters: 121 lives were lost when the steamer Wairarapa struck Miners Head, the north-west point of Great Barrier Island, 90 km north-east of Auckland. Despite thick fog, the Wairarapa was travelling at 13 knots (24 kph), nearly full speed, when it slammed into cliffs. Water began to flood in through a hole in the hull, and the Wairarapa listed to one side. Many of those on board slid off the deck into the sea; heavy seas swept others away. Those still on board clung to the rigging or climbed onto the bridge. A steward swam ashore with a line along which passengers hauled themselves through the water. Survivors huddled on the rocks for more than 30 hours before local Māori rescued them. A resulting Court of Enquiry laid the blame on the Wairarapa's captain, J.S. McIntosh. As well as maintaining excessive speed, he had taken the wrong course from the Three Kings Islands and not made allowance for currents.*

The list of those passengers (believed to be drowned) carried the name **Mr A. Bray**. Understandably, the Onehunga Bray family believed that person to be their son, **Arthur**, who had told his family of his plan to visit soon.

***An Onehunga Victim*** (Auckland Star 3 Nov 1894)

*About ten miles away, another body was found, that of a young man, badly discoloured by decomposition. The body was identified as that of Arthur Bray, a young resident of Onehunga, whose brother Alfred Bray recognised him. The deceased lived in Church Street, Onehunga, ... the body was put into a shiel and brought up to Auckland this morning.*

The Onehunga Bray family began to prepare for the funeral of Arthur at **St Peter's Church, Onehunga**.

***Notice of Funeral*** (Auckland Star, 3 Nov 1894)

**Bray:** Arthur, the dearly beloved and second son of William and Hannah Bray, in his 27<sup>th</sup> year, who was drowned in the wreck of the Wairarapa at the Great Barrier on October 29, 1894. The funeral will leave his father's residence, Church Street, Onehunga, tomorrow, (Sunday) at 4pm.

Meanwhile, a telegram arrived from Sydney saying that Arthur Bray was still in Australia and was alive and well.

***Singular Case of Mistaken Identity*** (Auckland Star, 5 Nov 1894)

*That truth is stranger than fiction is exemplified by a striking incident of the wreck. It now appears that a most singular case of mistaken identity has arisen with regard to the body of the young man, A. Bray, which was found on the rocks of Catherine Bay on Friday, and identified by Mr Alfred Bray, of Onehunga, as his lost brother and brought to Auckland for burial. All preparations were made for the interment by Mr Bray, of Onehunga, fully believing that the body was that of his son, and the death notice was actually inserted in the 'Star'. A telegram (from Sydney) was however received by Mr Bray (Onehunga) to say that his son had never left that city for Auckland.*

*Last evening the following two cable messages were received by Mr Bray (Onehunga) from Sydney:*

1) (from Asher's family) "Do not bury Bray. Coming over on Wednesday. Reserve in lead if necessary. Reply Bray, Enfield, Sydney."

2) (from Arthur Bray) "Do all possible for friend of deceased. Well off. Arthur Bray. Sydney."

*The mistake arose through the name of deceased on his clothes being the same.*

*The following cablegram was received from the Press Association this morning:*

*"Bray, drowned in the Wairarapa disaster, was a Sydney resident, not the son of an Onehunga resident, who, it is understood, claimed the body under the impression it was his son, who still resides in Sydney."*

**Asher Bray** was buried in St Peter's Cemetery on 13 November, 1894.

***New Zealand Herald*** (13 Nov 1894)

**Bray:** Drowned at the wreck of SS Wairarapa, Great Barrier Island, on 29 October 1894, **Asher Bray**, of Enfield, Sydney; aged 24 years. The funeral will leave the Railway Terminus Hotel, Onehunga, this day (Tuesday), November 13<sup>th</sup>, for St Peter's Cemetery.

The actual plot where Asher is buried is not definitively known; however, church records of the cemetery plots (drawn up in 1898) indicate that two Brays were buried in Plot 172. It seems that the Onehunga Brays welcomed the body of Asher Bray into the care of their family plot which already held the body of their son Percy Daniel Bray.

P.S. **Arthur Bray** lived until he was 74.

***New Zealand Herald*** (8 August 1941)

**Bray:** On August 7, at a private hospital, the, dearly beloved husband of Sarah Bray, 87 Albert Street, Devonport, and loving father of Inez, Thelma, and Eric; aged 74. Funeral will leave C. H. Barker's Chapel, Queen Street, Onehunga, at 2.30pm today (Friday) for Waikumete Crematorium.