

7.2 1904 Death of Dorothea

In Wellington, John had his family around him and the many references we have indicate that he was close to them especially Sam Gilmer and Andrew and John Knox Hamilton. More to the point, John's daughter Dorothea (Dollie) had migrated to New Zealand in 1878. She had moved to Wellington in 1879 and qualified as a school teacher with the Department of Education.

John was surprised as he did not know she was coming or that she was in New Zealand until William Gilmer had told them that she had come. However, he was very pleased with her arrival and immediately sent money to her for saloon passage on a steamer to Wellington. The view of the Irish side descendants is that John did not send any money to Ireland until after his wife Sarah died in 1895. By 1878 Dorothea was 26 years of age, old enough to make the voyage by herself and also to have earned and saved enough money to contribute to her own passage. However, she also borrowed money from Alex Burns which she was anxious to repay.

Interestingly, within a very short time of meeting her father, Dorothea sponsored Sarah Jane's migration to New Zealand¹. This probably followed her discussions with him. It would have also involved paying 7 Pounds towards the trip. However, Sarah Jane did not migrate and within 20 months she married Alexander Burns and stayed in Ireland.

It is not hard to establish motives for Dorothea's migration. She would have sought a better life as most Irish emigrants did. Even as an educated woman in Ireland she would have had difficulty obtaining meaningful work. School teachers were usually male and women were expected to take on more servile roles. Opportunities were limited. This was also the case for William Gilmer's wife who had difficulty in getting work as a school teacher in Ireland.

On the other hand, New Zealand was a young country, developing rapidly. The gold rushes had brought a rapid increase in population and by 1878 people, including her father, were moving to the large towns. There was an opportunity to obtain work and a demand for teachers without the home country bias in favour of men. Add to this the knowledge that her father was in New Zealand not to mention her relatives from Castleblayney. She would have been aware of Hamilton Gilmer's success and his return to Ireland to marry Elizabeth in 1871 and also the subsequent migration of Andrew Hamilton in 1875.

Dorothea's sister Lizzie (Gertrude Elizabeth) had died in 1871 and her brother Sam was probably at school at the London Polytechnic by 1878. There may have also been issues with her mother who seems to have been quite close to her younger sister Sarah Jane. There are stories that her mother, Sarah, was, demanding and hard to live with, having a bad temper and who had been cruel to her children.²

Dorothea was in Wellington in 1879 with a teaching job and earning 100 Pounds a year, a good salary for a single woman. Her accommodation would also have been provided. She worked in the Wairarapa region teaching in small rural schools, initially at Gladstone, near Carterton and later at Horakiwi, Paekakariki, Kaitoke, Matarawa and Hamua.

¹ Nomination dated 28 March 1879, IM 11, No. 3238, National Archives Wellington.

² Margaret (Burns) Watt as told to Gertie Hathaway (nee Watt)

We do not know how often she saw her father. Her job paid well and she would not have needed any financial assistance. Her schools in rural areas, while reasonably close to Wellington, would not have had good roads and travel would have been difficult.

Dorothea never married. She died at the young age of 53 years on 18 May 1904. Her Death Certificate showed she had heart disease for 5 years and pneumonia for four days. The ship on which she migrated, the Waitangi, had been quarantined on arrival at Lyttleton because there had been cases of Scarlet Fever on board. This disease is a recognized predisposing factor for rheumatic fever and rheumatic carditis, usually resulting in heart valve disease.³ At the time of her death Dorothea was teaching at Hamua Public School near Eketahuna.

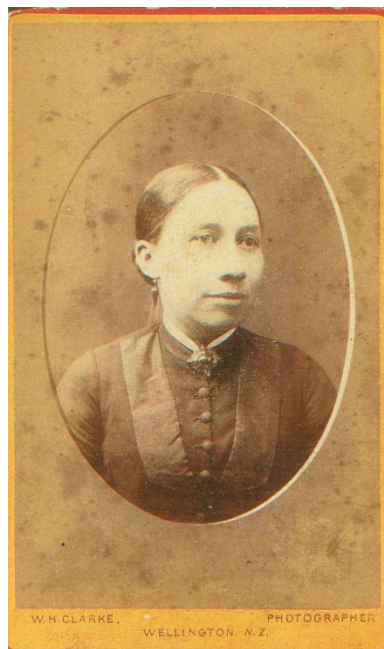
DEATHS

HAMILTON.—On the 18th May, 1904, at Hamua, Dorothea Hamilton, daughter of Mr. John Hamilton, of Marion-street, aged 53 years. Deeply regretted.

EAGLE.—On the 20th May, 1904, at her residence, Karori, Edith, the beloved wife of George Eagle and second daughter of Jas. B. and Emma Tani.

Death Notice Evening Post 21 May 1904

Dorothea was buried at Karori Cemetery and is now in the same grave as her father. The headstone incorrectly records her name as Dorothy.



Dorothea Hamilton 1851 to 1904

³ Dr Philip Watt

