

Notes on the Children of John Seed

William, born 23 November 1827, Liverpool, Lancashire, England; died 6 February 1890, Wellington, New Zealand.

Sarah Anne, born c1832, Liverpool, Lancashire, England; died after 1879, possibly in Australia.

William and Sarah Seed are the 1st cousins 3 x removed of Daphne, Laurence, Glenys and Lynette Hay, i.e. they are the children of the brother of the Hays' great-great-grandfather, Hugh Seed (who never came to New Zealand).

The Seed children accompanied their parents to this country in 1840, William aged 13 years and Sarah Anne, 8. On 5 July 1840, the Seed family left their home at 11 Edmond Street, Liverpool, for London where they embarked on the 'Martha Ridgway' at Gravesend for a free passage to New Zealand. The ship arrived in Port Nicholson with 202 immigrants on 14 November 1840.

William Seed

The first child of John Seed and Ann née Franklin was born on 23 November 1827 in Liverpool and baptised as William in St. Michael's Church, Upper Pitt Street in that city. It is not known where William was educated, but in the Seed Family collection in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, is an 1839 'penmanship book' full of superb copper-plate writing executed by the young student.

A great deal can be discovered of William's life in New Zealand. To begin with, Marjorie Connell in her Seed family history, says that William was first employed, in 1841, by the Wellington general merchants, W.B. Rhodes where he remained until being recruited by the New Zealand Company in 1846.

In September 1850, William travelled from Wellington to visit his parents at Goodwood, east Otago, where his father was employed as a builder. A letter has survived that William wrote from Goodwood to his wife of six months, who had remained at home. The letter includes a description of the journey, beginning with the sea voyage to Dunedin:

We had a long passage down, being eleven days before we reached Otago [*from Wellington!*], and during that time we experienced all the vicissitudes [*sic*] of a long voyage for we had fair winds and foul, calms and storms – and what was still more annoying we were three days off Pleasant River during which time I could distinctly see my father's house.

I stayed 2 days at Dunedin.... The 3rd day I walked down from Dunedin to Port Chalmers and stayed on board the ship. Yesterday I walked over to Waikouaiti with Mr Jones [*'Johnny' Jones*] & a pretty journey it was – the first hill we ascended was covered with bush – and it just took us an hour and a quarter to reach the top – after reaching the foot at the other side [*now Waitati*] we had about 3 miles of a mud flat [*Blueskin Bay*] to cross, occasionally up to our knees, and then by a native path through a long bush the remainder of the road [*Coast Road*]; we started at 9 in the morning &

reached Mr Jones' brother's [*at Waikouaiti*] at 6 in the evening – walking all the time even eating our lunch as we went along – I slept at Mr Jones' & breakfasted with Mr Creed [*the Methodist minister*] this morning – he lent me his horse to ride over here [*i.e. to Goodwood*] & procured me a native for a guide – the distance is 12 miles over open grassy country....

Such were the conditions of movement in a land with no railway and few roads, and where sea travel was totally dependent on the wind.

On William's retirement from the Civil Service in 1887 a long and appreciative tribute was published in the Wellington *Evening Post* of 29 June. It reads in part:

To-morrow New Zealand will lose the services of one of its oldest and ablest public officers in the person of Mr. William Seed, Secretary of Customs and Marine, who retires on pension after upwards of 41 years devoted to the service of the colony.

Mr. Seed arrived in New Zealand, from England, at a very early age, in company with his parents, who landed in Wellington in November, 1840. Six years after that, in February, 1846, young Seed entered the service of the New Zealand Company, in the office of the principal agent, the late Colonel Wakefield, and he remained in that office until January, 1851, when the affairs of the Company were handed over to the Government.

Mr. Seed was then transferred to the office of the Governor, Sir George Grey, and he remained under his Excellency until shortly before Sir George left New Zealand in 1853. Mr. Seed attributes much of his after success in official life to the excellent training he received while serving under Sir George Grey, and we know that Sir George then formed, and has ever since retained, the highest possible opinion of Mr. Seed's abilities and thorough trustworthiness.

The early pages of Marjorie Connell's book give fascinating information about William's relationship with Sir George Grey, and other matters. The newspaper article continues:

In July, 1853, Mr. Seed was transferred from the Governor's office to the Customs Department, entering it as Clerk and Warehousekeeper in Wellington. In March, 1855, he rose to the position of Sub-Collector at Napier, and in addition to that filled the offices of Sub-Treasurer, Postmaster, and Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and Provincial Sub-Treasurer there. In the commencement of 1857 he returned to Wellington as First Landing Waiter, and two years later was appointed Landing Surveyor.

On Sir George Grey's return to the Governorship of the Colony, he secured the services of Mr. Seed on his staff as Private Secretary, and Mr. Seed continued to discharge the duties of that position until December, 1863, when he was selected to fill the responsible position of Under-Secretary to the then newly-formed Defence Department, an office which he filled most satisfactorily during the most active operations of the Maori war in the Waikato.

On the transference of the seat of Government from Auckland to Wellington early in 1865, Mr. Seed was appointed Collector of Customs at this port, and in the following May the then Premier, Mr. – now Sir Edward – Stafford, appointed him permanent head of the Customs Department. In September, 1868, he was also appointed Deputy Auditor-General during the absence on leave of the Auditor-General, Dr. Knight, and in 1870, after the lamented death of Mr. Balfour, the Marine Engineer, Mr. Seed was appointed

permanent head of the Marine Department as well as of the Customs. The combined offices of Secretary and Inspector of Customs and Secretary to the Marine Department he has retained ever since, to the great benefit of the colony, discharging his onerous and multifarious duties with the utmost zeal, intelligence, and ability.

During his long public service Mr. Seed, in addition to his ordinary duties, has been entrusted with several special missions of delicacy and importance and has served on several commissions. In November, 1861, he had to visit the Chatham Islands on Customs business, and was instructed to report on the Islands generally. He did this in an able and interesting document, which was published in the New Zealand Gazette, and excited much favourable attention at the time. In March, 1865, he visited Hokitika to establish the Customs there, and he made a valuable report on the district, which then formed part of Canterbury, and about which very little was known. This report appeared in the Gazette.

In 1866 he was appointed a member of the Civil Service Commission, in conjunction with Dr. Knight, Mr. Gisborne, and the late Mr. J. M. Spence, an experienced officer of the Victorian Civil Service. Their duty was to enquire into and report on the Civil Service of this colony, and the Civil Service Act of that year was, we believe, drafted by them. In 1868 Mr. Seed was appointed a member of a Royal Commission to enquire into the system of keeping the Treasury accounts, and in 1870 he was sent to visit and report on the Navigator Islands. His very interesting report on this group was printed and laid before Parliament, and transmitted to the Home Government. Had the suggestions and recommendations then made by Mr. Seed been given effect to, as they then easily might have been, Samoa would now probably have been a British colony.

In 1871 Mr. Seed, with Mr. Batkin, was appointed to inspect and report on the various Government departments and establishments throughout the colony, with a view to Civil Service reform. Their report was necessarily of a confidential character, but its value was freely admitted by Ministers. Mr. Seed has several times visited the Australian colonies on Government business, and on one occasion he was instructed to enquire into and report on the working and management of the principal Government departments in New South Wales and Victoria.

In 1875, after a service of 29 years, Mr. Seed obtained leave of absence to visit the Old Country, and taking advantage of this the Government instructed him to obtain certain information respecting lighthouses and lighthouse administration, and accredited him to the Government of Canada. The result of his enquiries on those matters was given in an appendix to the Marine Report of 1876, and was of much practical value. He had also opportunities at the same time of investigating the working of revenue departments in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, and obtained much valuable information on the subject.

In April, 1886, he was deputed, along with Mr. Moss, M.H.R., and the Rev. Shirley Baker, Premier of Tonga, to proceed to Fiji to endeavour to arrange for a commercial treaty between New Zealand and that colony; and finally, in 1884, Mr. Seed was appointed on the Board, of which Messrs. Cooper, Batkin, and Gavin were members, to assist the late Premier, the Hon. Major Atkinson, in examining into the working of every department in the Government Buildings.

The mental strain caused by this work, whilst at the same time carrying on his ordinary duties, resulted in a serious attack of illness, which necessitated his leaving off work altogether and obtaining sick leave. The effect of that attack, we regret to say, has never wholly been shaken off, and in view of the increasing work of the Marine Department, Mr. Seed was reluctantly obliged to come to the conclusion that the wisest thing he could do was to retire on the pension to which he has been entitled for the past ten years.

The best practical proof that can be given as to the economical working of the Customs Department, as organised and managed by Mr. Seed, is the return of cost of collecting the revenue, which has been annually laid before Parliament for many years past. To the last of those returns the following note is appended:- "The cost of collection, if calculated on Customs revenue only (less drawbacks and refunds), amounted to £2 19s 6d per cent. In the United Kingdom, on the same basis, it was £4 9s 4d for the year ended 31st March, 1886."

Mr. Seed, throughout his long career, has proved himself an able and economical administrator – a man of unwearied energy, unswerving probity, and far more than ordinary intelligence and ability. His power of work has been immense, and he has filled all his various offices with credit to himself and advantage to the colony. His loss will be a great one to the public service, and will be deeply regretted by all who have served under him. With the exception of the Under-Secretary of the Colony, Mr. G.S. Cooper, Mr. Seed is the senior officer of the New Zealand public service.

It is to be hoped that when relieved of official care his health will soon be re-established, and in that case perhaps the colony may yet in other than an official capacity obtain the benefit of his great experience and social knowledge of its history, circumstances and capabilities.... He will carry with him into private life the respect and esteem of all who have been associated with him officially or privately....

Less than three years later, William Seed's obituary published in the 6 February 1890 issue of the Wellington *Evening Post* includes further information and expressions of appreciation:

Though the event was not altogether unexpected, a feeling of profound grief passed around the mercantile and official circles of the city this morning when it became known that Mr. William Seed, formerly Secretary of Customs and Marine, had breathed his last. For several months past Mr. Seed has been the victim of a complication of diseases, and though he rallied a short time ago, and was able to take outdoor exercise, his end was gradually but surely approaching. The deceased gentleman had a long and honourable career in the Civil Service of the colony, from which he retired on pension in July, 1887, having completed his 41 years of official life....

He continued to discharge [*his heavy official responsibilities*] until his retirement into private life, and he was always recognised as one of the most able public servants in New Zealand.... By all who have ever served under him or come into official contact with him, as well as by his hosts of personal friends, his death will be sincerely regretted.

On the alteration of the wards of the city a couple of years ago, Mr. Seed was persuaded to become a member of the new City Council for Lambton Ward, and he rendered the citizens good service in connection with the administrative reforms carried out last year. The decline of his health,

however, compelled him to relinquish this in common with his other public duties several months ago.

Mr. Seed was married twice, his first wife being Miss Eliza Cook, daughter of Mr. J. Cook, an old Makara settler, who landed here in 1842. His second wife, who survives him, is a daughter of Mr. George Allen, one of Wellington's oldest identities, and he leaves a large family, mostly grown up.

These very full accounts can be supplemented with information from other sources.

William married his first wife, the 19-year-old Eleanor (Elen or Nelly) Elizabeth Cook, in St Paul's church, Wellington, on 23 March 1850, when he was aged 22 or 23.

In 1855 when William moved to the frontier town of Napier, he bought land there and had a house built. However, he soon realised the disadvantages of life in a small, isolated township, and this, combined with the chronic poor health of his wife, led him to request a transfer back to Wellington. He returned to the city in 1857, leaving behind his parents, who had moved to Napier from Milton.

Despite his family and official duties, William found time, at least in his earlier years, to serve with the Wellington Volunteer Rifles, being commissioned as a lieutenant in the unit in June 1860.

Despite great success in his official career, William's personal life was not without sadness. Firstly, in the late 1850s his young wife and a baby daughter both died within the period of a few months. Eleanor's death notice published in the 4 December 1858 issue of the *Hawke's Bay Herald* reads as follows:

DIED At Wellington, on the 17th ult. [*i.e. November*], in the 27th year of her age, after a long and painful illness, the wife of Mr. WM. SEED, of H.M. Customs.

In later years three more of William's children were to die at a young age. The headstone of the family grave in the Church of England section of the Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington, tells the story:

In memory of
Eleanor Elizabeth
wife of W. Seed
who died November 17 1858, aged 27 years
and of Amy Jane
daughter of the above
who died January 12 1859, aged 4 months
also of Sidney Franklin
son of William and Mary Ann Seed
who died January 22 1870, aged 1 year 7 months
also of Charles Hugh
son of the above

whose sad and sudden death was caused by his having been accidentally shot by a playfellow on 23 June 1885, aged 12 years 10 months, deeply and sincerely regretted. His gentle and affectionate nature endeared him to all who knew him.

Also in loving memory of
William Seed Esq. J.P.
late Secretary and Inspector of Customs and Marine Dept
February 6 1890, aged 63 years

After the death of Eleanor, William had taken a second wife, Mary Ann Allen, in 1860.

In May 1866, when William was appointed Secretary for Customs, he was 39 years of age. The 'Nominal Roll of the Civil Establishment of New Zealand on 30th June 1875' (AJHR 1875, Section H11) gives the full picture of his official duties over the succeeding years: Secretary and Inspector of Customs (at a salary of £600 per annum), Chief Inspector of Distilleries (at £100), and In Charge of the Marine Department (£100), all concurrent. He was an important man – and wealthy.

Electoral rolls for the Bruce electorate show that from 1871 a William Seed owned land in the Table Hill district, some seven or eight kilometres north-west of Milton, Otago. Despite the fact that William's parents farmed in Milton, this man is not to be confused with 'our' William.

William's retirement from the Customs service was first announced in July 1882, including the information that he would take up a position as manager of the Wellington Trust, Loan and Investment Society; he was 55. Such was the outcry, including a long editorial in the *Evening Post* objecting that so valuable a public servant at the height of his powers was being permitted to take a government pension and move into a high-paying position in the private sector, that the decision was reversed and William continued for another five years with his heavy responsibilities – clearly to the detriment of his health.

When he finally retired, in 1887, as well as serving as a Wellington city councillor, he was for some time on the board of directors of the Australian Mutual Provident Society. William died in Wellington on 6 February 1890. His probate record gives his final occupation as 'Gentleman' – the carpenter's son had risen a long way in the world.

William fathered 13 children, three of whom died before reaching maturity. Born to Eleanor Elizabeth were:

- **Elizabeth Ann** Born in Wellington, birth registered in 1851; never married; death registered in 1919; buried in Bolton Memorial Park, Wellington.
- **Katherine Eleanor** Birth registered in 1852; married Lewis Henry Balfour Wilson in 1874; death registered in 1917; buried in Karori Cemetery, Wellington.
- **Frank William Richard** Birth registered in 1855; married Annie Lightband Jackson in 1880.
- **Amy Jane** Born in September 1858; died on 12 January 1859; buried in the Seed family grave in Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington, (but now reinterred in the mass grave in Bolton Memorial Park).

Born to Mary Ann were:

- **John George** Birth registered in 1861; married Frances Jane Wood in 1897; died in 1918.
- **Harry Hadlow** Born in Auckland, birth registered in 1864; married Florence Appleby in 1919; death registered in 1935; cremated in Karori Crematorium, Wellington, ashes interred (as Henry Haddon Seed) in the Seed family grave in Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington.
- **Lucy Jane** Birth registered in 1866; married Edward Rhaines Courtenay Bowen in 1889; died 1933.
- **Sidney Franklin** Born in June 1868; died on 22 January 1870; buried in the Seed family grave in Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington, (but now reinterred in the mass grave in Bolton Memorial Park).

- **Frederick Edward** Born on 17 April 1870; married Charlotte Edith Allen; death registered in 1945; cremated in Karori Crematorium, Wellington.
- **Charles Hugh** Born in August 1872; accidentally shot and died on 23 June 1885; buried in the Seed family grave in Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington, (but now reinterred in the mass grave in Bolton Memorial Park).
- **Jessie Gertrude** Birth registered in 1874; never married; died in 1938.
- **Mary Frances** Birth registered in 1877; never married; death registered in 1958; cremated in Karori Crematorium, Wellington, ashes interred in the Seed family grave in Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington.
- **Arthur James** Born on 3 November 1878; married Bertha Christina Aldrich in 1905; death registered in 1966; cremated in Karori Crematorium, Wellington, ashes interred in the Seed family grave in Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington.

Mary Ann Seed née Allen died on 3 April 1920 and was laid to rest in the Bolton Street Cemetery with her husband and children.

In 1967 their remains were disinterred to make way for the urban motorway, and reburied with thousands of others in a mass grave. The William Seed family gravestone has since been set up again as near to its original placement as possible. (It is on the town side of the motorway, on the right of some steps in the path that leads from the mass grave up alongside the motorway towards the pedestrian bridge.)

Sarah Ann Black née Seed

Sarah Ann married William Black, a 23-year-old carpenter, on 13 May 1850, the wedding taking place in her father's house at Goodwood, east Otago. It is probable that this man was the William Black who arrived in Wellington on 7 November 1842 from the ship 'George Fyfe' which had sailed from Gravesend, London.

The couple moved south to Milton within a year or two. Sumpter and Lewis in *Faith and Toil*, their centennial history of the Tokomairiro district, mention (p.117) 'the first builder [in Milton], Mr. W. Black, carried on his trade about 1855...'. Also, a William Black is recorded as being on a committee convened by the Milton Presbyterian Church to find a location for, and oversight the building of, a new church, eventually opened in 1863 (p.43).

William coupled his building work with running a small farm in the area known as Milburn. In their appendix on place names, Sumpter and Lewis, in speaking of 'Milburn' note:

In 1863 depasturing licences in the Waihola hundred were taken out by a number of settlers, including Mr. Black, or "Gentleman" Black, as he was called. His property became known as Millbourne, a name derived from its association with Mill Town [later Milton], and with the burn or bourne that flowed through the farm.

The *Bruce Herald* reported in its issues of 3 and 10 July 1874 that Mr William Black 'late of Milburn' had purchased 1,800 acres of hill land between the Tokomairiro Plain and the Big Bush, and also a farm known as Brookvale adjoining the Church of England parsonage in Milton, adding that 'Mr Black previously occupied this farm many years ago'.

At some time in the late 1870s, William took up a position as engineer at the lighthouse, Akaroa, Banks Peninsula. The *Bruce Herald* of 1 April 1879 reported that, on 30 March William 'was found dead on the ranges... near Akaroa. It is supposed he perished during a severe gale...'. The paper, commenting on this brief telegraphed information, spoke of William Black as

a well-known Tokomairiro settler... formerly of Milburn, whose family now reside at Brooklands.... Mr Black leaves 12 of a family, 6 sons and 6 daughters. Mrs Black lately visited her husband at Akaroa, and was to leave Wellington on her return homeward two days ago, and would probably reach Akaroa yesterday.

It is possible that Sarah Ann Black née Seed moved to Australia after this tragedy, remaining there until her death. The 12 children were:

- **Mary Anne**, the eldest daughter, married Walter Taylor, barrister-at-law, in Lawrence, Otago, on 10 May 1875. Walter died, aged 39, on 21 October 1881 at the Black farm, Brooklands.
- **Jane**
- The third daughter, **Edith Helen**, married Robert Hyndman in Milton in 1892.
- **Norah**
- **Kate Eleanor**, the fifth daughter, married Robert Edols of Aringa Station, Victoria, Australia, in 1897.
- **Lucy Ethel**, the youngest daughter, born in 1875, married David Brownlie of Dunedin in Greymouth in 1907.
- **William Jnr**, born in 1852, became a prominent public servant in Wellington.
- **John**, became a civil engineer.
- **Herbert**
- **Harry**
- **Robert Silvers** married Ellinor Archer of Christchurch, New Zealand, in Coolgardie, Australia, in 1898.
- The youngest son, **Ernest Franklin**, born in 1869, married Florence McKellar of Tapanui, New Zealand, in Nebraska, USA, in 1902 (he was working in Mexico at the time).