

Notes on Oliver Cook Spurdle and Maria née Litherland

[For fuller information re Oliver Cook Spurdle prior to his marriage see Notes on William Spurdle and Sarah née Sibley.

[Much of the material below is taken from essays by Carol Crandall included in Spurdle Heritage, privately published in New Zealand in 1992.]

Maria Litherland born: 6 March 1828, Appleby Magna, Leicestershire, England.

Oliver Cook Spurdle born: 16 March 1833, Seaborough, Somerset, England.

Oliver Spurdle arrived in NZ: On 23 February 1842 in 'Timandra' at New Plymouth.

Maria Litherland arrived in NZ: On 8 January 1850 in 'Berkshire' at New Plymouth.

Married: 1 October 1854, New Plymouth, New Zealand.

Children: ***Sarah**, born 31 December 1854; married Joseph Wallace, 10 December 1873, Whanganui.

Mary Ann(e), birth registered 1857; married Charles Astley, 1879.

Samuel Oliver, birth registered 1859.

Elizabeth Annie (Annis or Annice), birth registered 1863; married George Joseph Harford, 1879.

Frederick William, birth registered 1865; died 23 September 1878.

Annie, birth registered 1868; died two days after birth.

Henry, birth registered 1869.

Fred(erick), birth registered 1875.

*Great-grandmother of John, Peter, Margaret, Randle and David Major

Oliver Spurdle died: 18 September 1911, Inglewood, Taranaki, New Zealand.

Maria Spurdle née Litherland died: 27 December 1911, Feilding, Rangitikei, New Zealand.

Oliver's parentage, birth and early life

On 30 July 1832, in Seaborough, Somerset, England, William Spurdle Jnr married Sarah, the daughter of another longstanding Seaborough family, the Sibleys. William and Sarah's first child, a son, was born some seven months later on 16 March 1833 in Seaborough (probably in Sarah's parents' home), and christened Oliver Cook on 30 June in the Wesleyan chapel, Axminster, Devon. Three more children followed in quick succession: Maria Sibley, Mary Ann and William Akerman.

In what year William moved from Seaborough to the nearby town of Beaminster in Dorset is not known, but it is clear that he with Sarah and their growing family were resident there for at least the seven years before they made the courageous decision to journey to New Zealand.

And so in October 1841, William and Sarah Spurdle with their four children journeyed from Beaminster to Plymouth to board the 382-ton ship 'Timandra', which sailed on 2 November. On 23 February 1842, after a voyage of 113 days, the 'Timandra' anchored off the shore of the New Zealand Company colony of New Plymouth, Taranaki. The following day whaleboats carried the emigrants ashore to begin their new lives in a strange, new land. Oliver was almost nine years old.

What schooling Oliver had in New Plymouth, and how he was initially employed is not known, but in 1850, on his 17th birthday, Oliver began a four-year apprenticeship to Robert Baker, wheelwright, the trade he continued in for the rest of his active life.

Marriage

According to Carol Crandall, on 18 January 1850, one month before Oliver began his apprenticeship, the ship 'Berkshire' arrived in New Plymouth. On board was a young woman from Leicestershire named Maria Litherland, who had travelled with her aunt Lydia and Lydia's husband Thomas Wilson and their four children. Henry Brett in *White Wings*, volume 2, p.230, lists the 'Berkshire' as arriving off New Plymouth on 8 (not 18) January 1850. The passenger list for this journey (held by the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington) includes in the 'Paying Steerage' section Thomas and Lydia Wilson, four children aged 1 to 12, and a Miss Wilson aged 21. It would seem that Maria (if she is 'Miss Wilson' – the age is right) was travelling incognito.

Maria was the illegitimate child of Elizabeth Litherland, the daughter of a blacksmith and his wife, Samuel and Mary, living in Appleby Magna, Leicestershire. Evidence in family records suggests that Maria's father was one William Brunt. Maria's baptism in the local parish church is recorded as having taken place on 9 March 1828 and her birth on 6th of that month. Her mother died when Maria was not yet three years old.

Though Maria was five years older than Oliver, a relationship developed between them – marriageable women were scarce in colonial New Zealand. But by the terms of his apprenticeship, Oliver was not permitted to marry until he had served out his time, so it was not until 1 October 1854 that he and Maria were wed, in the Independent Chapel, New Plymouth. Their first child Sarah was born three months later, on 31 December. [*For further information on Sarah, see Notes on Joseph Wallace and Sarah née Spurdle.*] The family lived in Devon St until August 1856.

Oliver's newspaper obituary states that he 'took part in the campaign against the natives in the early forties' [presumably meaning the early 'sixties]. Defence Dept records confirm that he was in the volunteer force from an unspecified date until 23 November 1861.

Waitara and Inglewood

The obituary continues with the information that, later, Oliver 'opened a wheelwright and blacksmith's business at Bell Block, where he continued till 1867. Afterwards he removed to Waitara and joined his sons (Samuel Oliver and Henry Spurdle) in partnership, remaining with them till 1896...'. The motivation for Oliver's move to Waitara, with Maria and five children, can only be guessed at, but it occurred in the same year – 1867 – as his parents and younger brothers moved to Wanganui,

possibly to escape the Land Wars of the 1860s. Oliver's move, however, may also have been due to a perception that the future of New Plymouth, with no harbour to speak of, was not bright – a common feeling at the time.

While in Waitara the family suffered the tragedy of a son, 13-year-old Frederick William, drowning in the Waitara River. The fateful day was 23 September 1878.

In 1896, after 29 years in Waitara, Oliver and Maria made their last move – to Inglewood to live in a small cottage at 42 Brown Street. Their sons Samuel and Frederick moved to Inglewood at about the same time.

About 1902, when she would have been 74, Maria obtained household help in the form of her 15-year-old grand-daughter Annice Harford from Feilding.

Deaths

Oliver died on 18 September 1911, aged 78. Maria then moved to Feilding to be with her daughter Elizabeth Harford, but died some three months later, on 27 December 1911; she was 83 years old. Maria is buried with Oliver in the Inglewood Cemetery, Row E, Plot 11N.