

A J & J L Brown
24 Browning Street
Cambridge 2351
NEW ZEALAND

fax 64 / 827 6795

George Thomas Clayton

George Thomas CLAYTON was born in Chester, Cheshire, England September 7th 1791 to James CLAYTON and Susannah. Around his ninth or tenth year he was indentured aboard ship starting from Cabin Boy through to later life, Captain and owner of his own ship. During this period, although not proven, is a story of him working part of his seven years of indenture aboard a ship that was a known slave running ship.

In 1812 he married Elizabeth Eleanor FUNGE at Greenwich, Kent, England. Elizabeth was listed at being 21 years old.

Here the story alters. We here in New Zealand have been lead to believe that he was whaling in New Zealand waters about 1810-1812. On returning to England he took with him the daughter of a Maori Chief, and we have checked this and have an ancestry for her and the photos of her children could be said to bear some Maori features. But when Queen Victoria invited the Maori contingent from New Zealand she gave all of them the surname of FUNGE in Britain so both stories, the American side and the New Zealand side may be based on some facts.

In 1813 his first daughter Elizabeth CLAYTON was born, the second Mary Ann CLAYTON in 1815. His first son George Thomas Junior in 1820. My ancestress Elizabeth Eleanor CLAYTON was born on the 14 August 1824 in Greenwich so we assume that the first Elizabeth had predeceased her. In 1833 we know Emily CLAYTON was born on the 14th November 1833 in Stepney we did not find at this point any others in between. In 1835 William Jardine CLAYTON was born aboard ship, at Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. Quite interesting the Jardine name being included as this is the name of one of the partners in the Shipping company he worked for in 1841 at Kororareka (Russell), Bay of Islands, New Zealand. There the last child Catherine CLAYTON was born. Child bearing took forever.

In 1815, it was family knowledge or possibly story, that he was an officer aboard the HMS Northumberland which took Napoleon to St Helena. They left England August the 7th in 1815 and arrived in St Helena October the 17th 1815. He was 24 years of age.

In 1825 he was working, or so the story goes, aboard steamships which plied between England and India and he was possibly working for the East India Company. If he was, it was not in a position of officer, as they do not have records of him doing so. But this could be the training ground for his learning the Steamship trade.

On the 14th February he was back in England as that year he joined the Masonic Lodge on the 14th of August 1928.

By 1830, the East India Company's Navy was called the Bombay Marine.

In the early 1830s George was a Whaling Captain. He regularly sailed to China and in 1832 he went to China and then on to Australia with a ship load of Convicts.

We know that between 1833-1835 he was a Sea Captain with the JARDINE and MATHESON line.

He was a ships owner of the "JESS" aboard which William Jardine CLAYTON was born on the 24th November 1835. George was working for the East India Company at this time.

He was a well educated man for his time, proven by his letters and obviously had a financial plan, which failed him in the end. He tried, in my own opinion as a great, great, great, granddaughter to grow too fast in an unstable environment here in New Zealand.

5th February 1837 he took Hempleman from Sydney to establish a whaling station at Piraki on the Banks Peninsular. Their catch was to be offered to CLAYTON first.

On 6th February 1837 he landed on the shores of the South Island, New Zealand aboard the "Dublin Packet", of which he was Captain.

In 1837 he established whaling stations at Queen Charlotte Sounds and Waikokopu, Northern Hawkes Bay.

In October 1838, he purchased at least four blocks of land at Kororareka (Russell) Bay of Islands, New Zealand. He built a home and trading post there in the same year, then on one of his trips that year, picked up his wife Elizabeth and family from Sydney Australia. For the times, this family saw a great deal of the world and were well seasoned travellers.

He then used his schooner "JESS" to sail back and forth taking food and produce to the settlements and whaling stations. Just out of interest, the Guard family from the Marlborough Sounds, who had the main whaling station down there are my mother's side of the family, the Guards who are well documented in New Zealand history.

Also in October 1838 CLAYTON purchased land in Huaahine, Poverty Bay, Oneroa, Bay of Islands, another block at Kororareka, which was later surveyed and made into allotments. November 1838 saw him purchase a further three blocks including a settlement on the beach, where he moved to in 1839. In January of 1839 he again brought land at Kororareka and in the same year the whaling station at Waikokopu was burnt by Natives.

In 1841 he helped found the Bay of Islands Observer, the local newspaper and sat on several different committees and other groups.

On 29th April 1841 George T CLAYTON and Rev H WILLIAMS witnessed the signatures of 34 Port Nicholson Chiefs to the Treaty of Waitangi.

On the 30th October 1841 by Great, Great Grandparents, Elizabeth Eleanor CLAYTON and Charles Babington BREWER were married at Kororareka. Charles Babington BREWER had been one of the documented Barrister and Lawyers of the time and also a signatory to the Treaty of Waitangi – as was the Maori side giving me the unique privilege of having three Great, Great, Great Grandfathers' signing.

When Hone HEKE ransacked Kororareka and was causing problems, George Thomas evacuated his family aboard the American ship the "ST LOUIS" and shipped them down to Auckland. He moved them all to Sydney, Australia and never returned his family to Kororareka, although in 1847 tried, to no avail, to get money back for all the land he owned but lost more than he ever could afford, so all was falling to pieces around him.

In 1848 wife Elizabeth and two girls, Emily and Catherine were living in Hobart town, Tasmania, Australia. George Thomas, on the 20th December 1848 was in Hong Kong and in poor health and spirits. William Jardine was here in New Zealand and by a letter written by his father to a friend here, William seems to have had a brush of some sort with the law.

In 1849 George Thomas sailed for China then on to San Francisco and set up home for his family to follow a year later. He served as Proctor of Port of San Francisco, unsure of how long this post was for.

By 1850 William was with his mother and sisters in Australia and they boarded ship and left behind this side of the world forever, as far as we know. They went from Hobart to San Francisco in America.

Again tragedy struck as Emily died of cholera in America.

George Thomas devoted himself to mining in San Francisco and replaced the family monies before moving on to Yountville between 1851-1853. He was a member of the Napa Rangers, California Militia during the Civil War and built and owned the White House Hotel, where he resided until his death in 1856. Today his known descendants number 517 people.

His Children:

William Jardine didn't marry but had an interesting history. He like his father was a Masonic member and was awarded for 75 years of service in January 1932. He was made a Master Mason in Cavamus Lodge at Yountville Napa County USA in December 1856 and was also Master of the Lodge during Civil War times.

In 1883 William moved to Lower Lake where he engaged in stock raising until 1919, when he bought and moved to the orchard in big valley where he died. He was called affectionately 'Uncle Billy' and was known as a man of splendid and upright character and great kindness. He was still working his ranch and pruning his pear trees the week before his death and was still very mentally aware and capable to the end. He used a one horse plow and walked to town regularly right up to the time of his death. He died Friday 6th of July 1932 at his home south of Lakeport.

We understand the first Elizabeth and Mary Ann died young. George Thomas junior seems to have met the same fate as he disappears.

Their other daughter Elizabeth was left behind with her husband and family in New Zealand. Charles Babington and Elizabeth Eleanor CLAYTON had thirteen children whose descendants live mainly in New Zealand, Australia and America. Elizabeth Eleanor eventually went with her youngest son to Imperial Valley USA, where in 1916 she died from burns resulting from her dress catching fire, she was 92 years old. Today she has some 490 known descendants.

Catherine CLAYTON married Mr Larry La Motte in 1861 and we know this family came to New Zealand to bring the first trout to be placed in Lake Taupo. We only have a very sparse tree on this side of the family. The Brewer descendants are trying to find out more. Catherine died aged 76 years, in 1917 at Lakeport California, USA.

Sources:

Family information

Family papers

Papers and letters retrieved from Alexander Turnbull Library

Newspaper clippings

Many varied book references

Amended by Belinda Davis, Wellington City Libraries, 2002, with permission.