

Pumpkin Cottage - Silverstream

Section 82 & 83

There are many stories about Pumpkin cottage in Silverstream. Who built it, who lived in it and the who named it Pumpkin Cottage. I have tried to put all the stories together then locate information to confirm and sometimes disprove the stories. I will leave it to you to interpret the results.

Chief Te Kaeaea - Taringakuri (dog ears)

Whirinaki was the early name given to the Silverstream area by the local Maoris. The Whirinaki Chapel also known as the Maori Church was situated in Silverstream. Some publications recorded that the Maori Church was established in 1837 and that it was once situated where the St Patrick's college tennis courts are now. Some believe the Maori church was closer to the Home of Compassion which is further north from the college.

Across the road from the Maori Church was the Wirinaki Pa (village) where the resident chief was Te Kaeaea also known as Taringa Kuri and Whitoa Taringakuri (dog's ears). Next to the Pa and north of Thomas's Cotters homestead was a hut known as Te Whare o Turingakuri. This is where the chief resided when he visited the Pa.

The story goes that the hut known as Te Whare o Turingakuri was actually Pumpkin cottage.

One publication states that the Whirinaki Pah was in existence in 1837 the same year given for the establishment of the Maori church. The New Zealand Company settlers arrived at Port Nicholson in 1840. The Whirinaki Pa may have been established around 1837 but I believe the Maori church was established later perhaps in 1847.

Thomas Cotter

Thomas Cotter's descendants state that it was Thomas who built Pumpkin cottage in 1874 and it was a member of the Cotter family who placed the pumpkin on the chimney of the cottage.

The story of the Maori chief residing in the cottage before his death in 1871 is not possible as the story told is that Thomas Cotter built the cottage in 1874.

The cottage name came about due to a signal devised by brothers who farmed the land. When one brother wanted to let the other brother know he should get off the train at Silverstream to help milk the cows, he would hoist a pumpkin onto the cottage's chimney as a signal.

Thomas Cotter (1847-1889) married 1868 Susannah Anne nee Dixon. Susannah (1843-1877) died and was buried at St Johns churchyard in Trentham. They had four children, Margaret Louisa Sarah born 1870, Percy Charles born 1872, Thomas Arthur born 1874 and John born 1875.

In 1879 Thomas Cotter married Emma Ann Haybittle. Emma (1859-1929) was the daughter of Emma (1840-1903) and William George Haybittle(1822-1898). They had three children, William Stanley born 1880, Evelyn May born 1884 and Lilian Maud born 1886. Thomas Cotter died 24 May 1889 at Silverstream and was buried at St John's Anglican churchyard Trentham.

Emma Cotter's younger brothers were Ralph Stanley Haybittle (1876-1960) and Charles Richard Haybittle (1871-1907). They might have helped on the Cotter farm before 1895.

It may have been the widow Emma Cotter who rented the cottage to James Nairn around 1895. Perhaps Emma may have employed her brothers to assist on the farm.

Around 1895 the artist James Nairn first rented the cottage. Other publications state that James rented the cottage to use as an art school from 1894 to 1904. James Nairn died in 1904.

How the cottage got its name – Quote “Nairn got a small [pumpkin] tied it to the end of a small stick which he stuck under the gable roof & painted on the wall beneath the legend “Ye signe of ye golden pumpkins”. Later the pumpkin fell away & he made a yellow drawing in place of it on the gable

(Reference source Maurice Crompton-Smith to Stanley Edwards 1939)

Haybittle and Seagar family

How the cottage got its name – The cottage name came about due to a signal devised by the sons of Charles and Emma Haybittle who farmed the land and lived just behind the cottage. When young Ralph Haybittle wanted to let his brother know he should get off the train at Silverstream to help milk the cows, he would hoist a pumpkin onto the cottage’s chimney.

(Reference source Maurice Crompton-Smith to Stanley Edwards 1939)

The facts above about Emma and Charles Haybittle are not quite correct.

Emma’s (1840-1903) husband was actually William George Haybittle (1822-1898) and they resided around the Wallaceville / Trentham area not in Silverstream. William’s close friend was Charles Seagar (1833-1918) who lived at “Sherwood House” which was situated on the hill above Silverstream. Charles’s land is where the Silver Stream Railway Museum is now situated and would have also included part of the old Silverstream hospital and Landfill.

Charles’s wife Frances Emily Seagar (1835-1909) died and was buried at St Johns churchyard Trentham. In 1911 Charles Seagar married Wilhelminia Haybittle the daughter of the late Emma and William George Haybittle. Charles Seagar (1833-1918) died and was buried at St John churchyard Trentham. Charles’s widow Wilhelminia Seagar inherited “Sherwood House” and her siblings were known to have assisted in farming the land. Some of Wilhelminia’s siblings lived, died and were married at “Sherwood House”. Wilhelminia (1869-1937) died and was buried St Johns churchyard Trentham.

Wilhelminia’s younger brothers were Ralph Stanley Haybittle (1876-1960) and Charles Richard Haybittle (1871-1907) who may have helped to farm the land.

Pumpkin cottage was rented around 1895 to James Nairn. If Ralph Haybittle farmed the land where the Pumpkin Cottage was situated then it would have been before Charles Seagar’s first wife Francis died in 1909.

In conclusion I believe it was Emma Cotter who owned Pumpkin cottage and rented it to James Nairn in 1895. After the death of James Nairn in 1904 then perhaps Emma’s brother Ralph, farmed the land where Pumpkin cottage was situated.

In 1926 St Patrick’s College bought the land and cottage. One story states that the cottage was extended to be used as accommodation for the College, restored and extended again to artists until 1949 when the lease was revoked. Originally on the land where St Patrick’s college was built was a two story villa built by the Cotter family. Part of the story above may have been connected to both the villa and Pumpkin cottage.

By 1930 the cottage was in poor shape.

By 1970s the cottage was run down and despite a concerted campaign beginning in 1974 the move to save the building failed.

St Patrick's College demolished it in 1980 but the Fergusson Drive site, now Pumpkin Cottage Reserves was marked in 2000 by a Hutt River boulder donated by Ernest and Shirley Cosgrove.

Miscellaneous information relating to Pumpkin Cottage

Subject and People

Bohemians of the Bush – Pumpkin Cottage Impressionists

An exhibition developed by Expressions Arts and Entertainment Centre based on the Pumpkin Cottage paintings Collection gifted by Ernest and Shirley Cosgrove curated by Jane Vial. This publication has numerous images of the painting and information about Pumpkin cottage.

In the publication there are various painting and photographs of Pumpkin cottage and the surrounding area of the Upper Hutt district. There is also a photograph of James Nairn and the famous photograph of the cottage taken by James Chapman-Taylor

For about 50 years Pumpkin Cottage was a retreat for bohemian artists to paint, discuss and develop a unique New Zealand style of impressionism.

(Bohemians of the Bush – Pumpkin Cottage Impressionists page 4-5)

Nairn first rented the cottage in about 1895 near the train line at Silverstream.

The building was unremarkable in itself a two room pitched roof cottage with veranda, built of local matai. Ngati Tama chief Te Kaeaea stayed there when he visited the nearby Whirinaki Pa from the 1850s. Pumpkin cottage was moved further up Hutt Main Road to its present site sometime after Te Kaeaea's death in 1875.

How the cottage got its name – The cottage name came about due to a signal devised by the sons of Charles and Emma Haybittle who farmed the land and lived just behind the cottage. When young Ralph Haybittle wanted to let his brother know he should get off the train at Silverstream to help milk the cows, he would hoist a pumpkin onto the cottage's chimney.

Quote "Nairn got a small [pumpkin] tied it to the end of a small stick which he stuck under the gable roof & painted on the wall beneath the legend "Ye signe of ye golden pumpkins". Later the pumpkin fell away & he made a yellow drawing in place of it on the gable reference source Maurice Crompton-Smith to Stanley Edwards 1939.

(Bohemians of the Bush – Pumpkin Cottage Impressionists page 6-7)

By 1930 the cottage was in poor shape. St Patrick's College had bought the land and cottage in 1926 and extended it to be used as accommodation for the College, restored and extended it again to artist until 1949 when the lease was revoked. By 1970s the cottage was run down and despite a concerted campaign beginning in 1974 the move to save the building failed. St Patrick's College demolished it in 1980 but the Fergusson Drive site, now Pumpkin Cottage Reserves was marked in 2000 by a Hutt River boulder donated by Ernest and Shirley Cosgrove

(Bohemians of the Bush – Pumpkin Cottage Impressionists page 30)

James (Jim) NAIRN – The Bohemian Artist

0- James McLachlan NAIRN born 1859 Scotland died 22 February 1904 New Zealand married 1898 New Zealand **Ellen SMITH** born died

#James Maclachlan NAIRN married 1898 New Zealand Ellen SMITH reference RGO NZ marriage registration 1898 folio website 1898/503

#James McLachlan NAIRN died 22 February 1904 peritonitis New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1904 folio website 1904/1186 age 45 born about 1859

#Ellen NAIRN married 1910 New Zealand Alfred MILES reference RGO NZ marriage registration 1910 folio website 1910/6394

#Alfred MILES died 1912 New Zealand reference RGO NZ death registration 1912 folio website 1912/296 age 44 born about 1868

#Ellen MILES married 1916 New Zealand Frederick TAYLOR reference RGO NZ marriage registration 1916 folio website 1916/6477

0-1- Mari Bhan NAIRN born 1898 New Zealand married 1915 New Zealand Frederick Charles HAYCRAFT

#Mari Bhan NAIRN born 1898 New Zealand reference RGO NZ birth registration 1898 folio website 1898/8177 parents Ellen and James Maclachlan

#Marie Bhan Og NAIRN married 1915 New Zealand Frederick Charles HAYCRAFT reference RGO NZ marriage registration 1915 folio website 1915/14681

#Miss Bahn Ogh Nairn daughter of the late Mr J M Nairn and of Mrs E Miles (formerly Mrs Nairn) of Wellington and Mr F Haycraft of the Wellington branch of the State Fire Insurance whose engagement was recently announced were married at St Paul's Pro-Cathedral Wellington on Saturday last. The Rev Mr Fancourt was the officiating clergyman. The bride who was attended by her sister (Miss Ellen Nairn) wore a cream tailored costume with a cream crepe de chine hat trimmed with black velvet pansies, and carried a bouquet of pink carnations. The bridesmaid's costume was a navy coat and skirt, with which she wore a white tagel hat. Her bouquet was of violets and snowdrops. Lieut. A Sievewright acted as best man. The rooms at Sayes Court, where, the reception was held, were decorated with pink white flowers. The bride's mother was attired in a smart checked costume, with which she wore black fox furs and a cream tagel hat. Mrs L Smith (an aunt of the bride) wore a black tailored costume, with ermine furs, and black velvet hat. Mr and Mrs Haycraft left for the north, on their honeymoon tour, the bride wearing a gabardine coat and skirt, and a brown tagel hat reference Papers past website

0-2- Ellen May Victoria NAIRN born 1901 New Zealand Sun newspaper 27 July 1915 page 4

#Ellen May Victoria NAIRN born 1901 New Zealand reference RGO NZ birth registration 1901 folio website 1901/14887 parents Ellen and James Maclachlan

James Nairn had a sister Isabell who also settled in New Zealand

0- Isabell NAIRN born Scotland died New Zealand married Scotland Thomas MCGIBBON born Scotland died New Zealand

#Thomas McGibbons and his family first settled in Matarua in Southland

0-1-

Pumpkin Cottage Silverstream

A local Upper Hutt history records how the cottage got its name. *"Pumpkin cottage name came about due to a signal devised by the sons of Charles and Emma HAYBITTLE, who farmed the land and lived just behind the cottage. When young Ralph HAYBITTLE wanted to let his brother know he should get off the train at Silverstream to help milk the cows, he would hoist a pumpkin onto the cottage's chimney"*.

NOTE - William George and Emma HAYBITTLE resided in the Wallaceville/Trentham area. The cottage was situated on Charles SEAGAR farming property in Silverstream. It is clear that the two great friends had their Christian and surnames mixed up.

Charles's wife died in 1909 and in the same year when William's daughter Claire HAYBITTLE died the funeral left the residence of Charles Seagar of Silverstream. Charles married William's daughter Wilhelmina Haybittle in 1911.

Another publication gave another story about the cottage

"Nairn first rented the Pumpkin cottage in about 1895 near the train line at Silverstream. The building was unremarkable in itself a two room pitched roof cottage with veranda, built of local matai. Ngati Tama chief Te Kaeaea stayed there when he visited the nearby Whirinaki Pa from the 1850s. Pumpkin cottage was moved further up Hutt Main Road to its present site sometime after Te Kaeaea's death in 1875".

(Bohemians of the Bush – Pumpkin Cottage Impressionists page 6-7)

NOTE - Chief Te Kaeaea also known as Taringa Kuri died on 05 October 1871.

Perhaps the story cottage got its name from this story.

“Nairn got a small [pumpkin] tied it to the end of a small stick which he stuck under the gable roof & painted on the wall beneath the legend “Ye signe of ye golden pumpkins”. Later the pumpkin fell away & he made a yellow drawing in place of it on the gable” reference source Maurice Crompton-Smith to Stanley Edwards 1939.

(Bohemians of the Bush – Pumpkin Cottage Impressionists page 6-7)

Another source stated it was Thomas COTTER owned the land with the cottage and placed the pumpkin on the chimney. When Thomas’s wife died he married Emma HAYBITTLE the daughter of William and Emma HAYBITTLE.

The descendants of Thomas Cotter state that he built the cottage and I believe this statement is correct.

Ralph HAYBITTLE was the brother of both Wilhelmina Seagar nee Haybittle and Emma Cotter nee Haybittle. I believe Ralph resided in Pumpkin cottage and farmed the land but for which brother –in-law Charles SEAGAR or Thomas COTTER

By researching the land documents and creating a time line ownership of the property along with additional research then perhaps it will reveal other stories about Pumpkin cottage.
