

CLARK: WALTER MACE

Born: 1 Jul 1870, Wellington, New Zealand

Married: 3 Jan 1895, Waitotara, South Taranaki, New Zealand

To: Maud Annie Phillips (1869 – 1960)

Died: 21 Apr 1934, Levin, New Zealand

Buried: Tiro Tiro Road Cemetery, Levin, New Zealand

Walter's parents were:

William (1830 – 1902) & Margaret (nee Bevan) (1832 – 1922)

Walter had 5 brothers & 5 sisters:

George Bevan (1855 – 1906)

Joseph Masters (1856 – 1945)

Margaret Caroline (1858 – 1940) married Walter Robarts

William Buddle (1860 – 1872)

Samuel Budget (1862 – 1952)

Julie Maria (1863 – 1874)

Thomas Lewis (1866 – 1872)

Millicent Beatrice (1868 – 1872)

Lottie Mayfield (1873 – 1944) married Alexander Scott

Minnie Geraldine (1875 – 1910) married Thomas William Witt

Walter & Maud had 4 children:

Edna Maria Hinetaupiri (1895 – 1973) married Hugh Duncan Campbell (Jnr)

William Gray (Bill) (1896 – 1981)

Thomas Henry (1897 – 1922)

Elsdon Walter (1899 – 1995)

When Walter Mace Clark started his business in Oxford Street, Levin, in 1894, little did he know that it would still be in family hands four generations later.

With a thorough grounding in the drapery business his knowledge was passed to two sons, who passed the baton to a nephew whose son and grandson are at the head of the business today.

Walter was born in Wellington, the youngest son of William and Margaret Clark.

William (1830-1902) had arrived on the ship "London" on 12 December 1840 from England with his younger brother Joseph in the care of their Aunt Louisa Fitchett.

The boys' father had died, and their mother Maria remarried and sometime later settled in Australia.

In 1854 William started a drapery business at 120 Lambton Quay, Wellington, where Walter would later train. In the same year he married Margaret Bevan, who had arrived 17 March 1841 on the barque "Lady Nugent"

Walter was educated at Wellington Terrace School under John Young and in 1885-1886 attended Wanganui Collegiate School, under Dr Harvey.

To reach Wanganui in those days it was necessary to leave Wellington at 4am and from Paekakariki proceed along the beach to Foxton, which was reached at 4pm. After a night's rest a trip was made on a tram line to the mouth of the Rangitikei River at Tangimoana, and then by coach to Wanganui, arriving at 10pm. Naturally, as a boy, Walter did not go home for the weekend.

When he left school, he joined his father in his drapery store. William Clark was the first direct importer of soft goods in Wellington. A year later, to gain wider experience, Walter went to Melbourne, where he remained for two years. Then after spending three months in Sydney, he returned to Wellington and a job with James Smith of Te Aro House.

His father's business went bankrupt in 1888/89, which would have been in and around the time Walter arrived back, and might explain his new employer.

At the age of 19, he had charge of men's clothing and tailoring for James Smith and later went on the road as a traveller to the Wairarapa and southern Hawkes Bay.

He rode a horse and had a pack horse and sometimes a dog cart. He was fond of animals and owned good horses, and later would tell many stories of narrow escapes in crossing flooded rivers and nights spent in the bush.

He was transferred to Taranaki and it was there he met Maud Annie Phillips. They were married in Waitotara (between Whanganui and Patea) in 1895.

Walter arrived in Levin in 1892 to open a branch of Te Aro House. Two years later he was so impressed with the future of Levin that he took over the business.

That first little shop was on the site of the present premises and the shop has been known as 'Clark's' since September 22 of that year.

W M Clark, drapery, dominated the clothing trade for 84 years (1894 – 1978). It was "Levin's Best Store" and one of the oldest. Walter was able to hold prices at a time of rapid inflation because "we purchased large stocks during the earlier stages of the war [World War I] and before the shortage of many lines was experienced".

Right from the start he took an interest in the progress and welfare of the town. In 1902 he was the first secretary of the volunteer fire brigade and the vigilance committee, which was formed to oversee things like the post office being situated in the right place and the school in a central locality.

With Fred Roe he was joint secretary of the first Levin Tennis Club. His later activities included membership with the Levin Racing Club and the Horowhenua A. and P. Association. He was also at one time a member of the Levin Bowling Club and Levin Club; a founder and life member of the Levin Golf Club, vice president of the Levin Silver Band Society a member of the Horowhenua Lodge of Freemasons.

A great lover of the seaside, much of his leisure time was spent at Hokio and he was a keen advocate for the improvement and development of the beach town.

Described as 'one of nature's gentlemen' Walter always gave liberally of his time and any deserving project could always rely on his support.

He was actively engaged in business until 12 months before his death in 1934 after a long illness.

The shop closed for the day for his funeral, the cortege being one of the largest seen in the district.

The large number of floral tributes were carried on a lorry from his home in Salisbury Street, where the service was held, to the cemetery in Tiro Tiro Road.

The pallbearers were a who's-who of Levin business and society.

J E Wallace, F E Parker, W Phillips, Geo Cameron, P McLeavey and K Shaw from his home and H Walker, H Walkley, H Denton, D S Mackenzie, J A Smith and E S Lancaster at the cemetery.

A Masonic funeral service was also held at the graveside.

THE CHILDREN

Walter and Annie had four children – Edna Maria Hinetaupiri, William (Bill) Gray, Thomas Henry and Elsdon Walter.

Thomas died as a result of service in World War I. He embarked 10 July 1918 on the Tahiti with the 40th Reinforcements and was a victim of the influenza epidemic on the ship. He was invalided home and died in Levin 2 April 1922 aged 24 and is buried in the Tiro Tiro Road Cemetery.

When Walter died in 1934 the shop was run by his sons William (Bill) Gray Clark and Elsdon Walter Clark. Bill looked after the menswear side of the business while Elsdon looked after the drapery.

A dispute arose between the brothers and the shop was divided into two businesses. Elsdon's was called W M Clark, Bill's was called William Clark and Son (Douglas).

A grandson, Walter (Wally) Lawrence Clark, had the Sound Centre and Levin Recording Studios situated above the shops across Oxford Street.

W M Clark is still in business today and in the family as Clark's Menswear, run first by Brian Campbell (Edna's son) and now her grandson Maurice Campbell as Clark's Clothing. Maurice and his son Isaac have set up a popular café Taper in part of the premises.

FAMILY LEGACIES

Maud Clark (later Mrs Lett) donated land to the Levin RSA in memory of her son Thomas Henry who died of influenza during his service in World War I and a bowling club was set up. Included was a memorial avenue remembering members who have died. RSA Bowling Green is known as the Clark Memorial Green.

Elsdon and Alma had no children and when Alma died their family homestead in Salisbury Street went to the Presbyterian Social Service for an old folk's home called Reevedon. The name is a combination of Alma's maiden name, Reeves, and Elsdon.

Their home was at the southern part of the Salisbury Street complex. Elsdon persuaded other homeowners north of his homestead to offer their properties to the Presbyterians so that the complex could expand, giving more accommodation to the elderly.

This reached almost as far as the RSA Bowling Green. The last property was the grand Clark homestead, originally built and owned by Walter Mace and Maud.

WALTER MACE CLARK'S DESCENDANTS

EDNA MARIA HINETAUPIRI married Hugh Duncan Campbell, bearing 6 children:

1. Edna Maud 'Maud', married Sydney Hinde (children Judith and Robin)
2. Hugh Ian Duncan 'Ian', married Margaret Jean Lumsden (children Hugh Hamilton, Neil Ian, Janet Sheryl)
3. Donald Lachlan 'Don', married Fay Marion Tabor (children Karen Fay, Jenette/Jenny Helen, Donna Elizabeth, Tracey Lee)
4. Dawn Clark, married Ian Malcolm Juno (children David, Paul and Denise)
5. Bryan Mace, married Myra Lois Hewitt (children Maurice John and Samuel William)
6. Trevor Elsdon, married Kay Tyson Collins (children Bevan James and Cushla Clare)

WILLIAM GRAY married 1. Edith Evelyn Lawrence. 2. Mary Isobel Lawrence

1. Walter Lawrence (Wally) married Marjorie Lucy Ede (children Garry, Kevin, Carolyn, Neil, Peter)
2. Douglas Elsdon married Rona Easton (children Brian, John, Glenis, Ross)
3. Frances Alma married 1. Lloyd Nicholls 2. Jock Cormack (children Murray Lloyd)

THOMAS HENRY died in 1922

ELSDON WALTER, no children

OTHER FAMILY

Walter's mother was Margaret Bevan before her marriage. Her parents were Thomas and Mary Bevan. Mary died at sea in 1841 on the family's journey to New Zealand.

Her siblings were George (1823), Edward (1826), Margaret (1827, died at birth), Henry (1828, died at sea), Mary (1834), Thomas (1836), William (1838), and Nugent (1841, died at sea).

The Bevan family established itself in and around Otaki.