

GEORGE COOPER, Pensioner Guard.

WILLIAM JOHN AGNEW McCAW, Convict.

George Cooper, a pensioner guard, arrived with his wife and 3 children on board the "William Hammond" in 1856, and William John Agnew McCaw was transported on board the "Belgravia" in 1866.

The Coopers settled in Fremantle where George was a prison warden for a time and over the next 10 years produced another 5 children.

In 1859 George bought a block in the Cockburn district - one of the small grants of between 10 and 40 acres - built a stone house and farmed the land.

Life for the Coopers could not have been easy. The land at North Lake was poor, heavy sand and often cows were lost or dragged down in the swamp. Fremantle was 6 miles away by sand track.

In the 1860s they must have made wine at Bibra Lake for it is recorded that Jane used to take her shoes off, wash her and then tread the grapes.

George also built several houses in Fremantle from stone that he quarried in Beaconsfield. In Queen Street he built a town residence and dairy farm. This stood next to the original Crown and Anchor Inn, which was later used as a girl's school, built on the site where Walsh's store now stands.

Of the 2 sons and 6 daughters born to the Coopers, all married except the 4th child Ann, who was crippled and died at the age of 24.

But the heroine of the family was Jane who was only 16 at the time of her parents' death and went to work "in service" to support two younger sisters. Not only did she raise them, but on the death of an elder sister who had married William John Agnew, she stepped in to help her brother-in-law bring up his 3 children.

Jane eventually married William Agnew and bore him 9 children, one died but she was still mother to 11 offspring.

William John Agnew who had the distinction of marrying 2 of the Cooper girls, was born William McCaw at Wigtownshire near Glasgow, in 1844, the son of a tailor. At the age of 22, William, having been convicted of theft by "opening lockfast and petty larceny", arrived in W.A.. For this offence he was sentenced to 10 years Penal Settlement Service.

His religion was the Free Church of Scotland and he could read and write. After various minor misdemeanours he was granted a Ticket of Leave in 1870 and put on probation for 5 years. During this time he was convicted of stealing a quantity of tea and sentenced to 12 months Hard Labour at Fremantle Prison.

After this William appeared to turn over a new leaf. He returned to his former trade of Tailoring, set up in business in Fremantle and became a pillar and founder member of the Church.

In 1881, upon his marriage to Jane Cooper he resumed his rightful name of McCaw and carried on his work of Master Tailor until his death in 1911. His tailoring had a good name for uniforms, regalia, and robes of office for bandsmen, mayors, councillors and lodge officers. He thrived on this quotation: "A suit cut out and made up at all times in 5 hours 30 minutes".

A Family-Reunion of the Cooper-McCaw descendants was held at Bibra Lake on Sunday, 25th. February, 1979.

Organiser of the gathering was Mrs. Lexie Beardmore of
12 Highlands Road
North Perth
Tel. 444 7334.

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*Photo on
other side.*