

Oral Family History Transcription

Recording oral history can form an interesting part of genealogy. The following passages have been transcribed from a letter recorded on audiocassette and sent from **William Geal** of Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA to his nephew **Charles Arthur Webb** of Norfolk, England.

William made this tape in response to Charlie's request to outline what he knew about his family. William was quite old by this time, but he managed to convey in clear and precise words the stories that he had been told by his parents **William Walter Geal and Eliza Sutor Geal (nee Barlow)** who were married at Mt Albert Barracks, Auckland, NZ on 26th September 1866.

At the end of the transcript I made notes about various points of interest.

Transcript of the tape....

"My father William Walter Geal was born in Kentish Town, London and had two sisters. He had no schooling and could not read or write. He was a very strict father, particularly with me, his only son. He once found out that I had not gone to school one day and he beat me so hard that I could not go out for a week. "

"He [meaning William Walter Geal] was walking down the street [in New Zealand] and saw a fire in one of the houses and just then a girl ran up and asked him if he would save someone in there. That girl was my mother [Eliza Sutor Barlow] and he ran over and helped the person out of the house and so they got acquainted and finally, she told him she would do anything or go anywhere to get away from home. The Army had been ordered home to England, he was Batman to his Colonel and he asked his Colonel if they could arrange to take the girl back home with them. The Colonel said "Oh I think so but you would have to marry the girl". Oh yes said [my father] I would marry the girl. The Colonel said it would be alright and they could be married by the Captain of the ship. So she [Eliza] told her father she was leaving but would not tell him where she was going. In the meantime, she also told her father that the Colonel was auctioning his personal goods, because he was unable to take them back with him to England. Her father [William Barlow] put in a bid and won by a great margin and this is where he made his money. William Barlow sold his trading post and bought a farm".

"And so my mother [Eliza] packed a few things and left New Zealand with her husband William Geal They went to Aldershot where my sisters Elizabeth and Mary were born and then moved to Woolwich where Margaret was born. I was born in Curraghmore Ireland and Louisa was born in Dublin.

My father then left the army and we moved to London where he worked in a cab rank as a horse

Barlow-Geal Family History

keeper. He was working for a milk manufacturing company in Finsbury Park when my mother heard about the death of her father [William Barlow] and that he had left her a lot of money. She invested the money in the milk company but they went broke and so all the money was lost. My father was so upset that he left home for about a week but my mother told him she wasn't worried about the money, it was him she wanted back home”.

“I used to write to my mother's elder sister when I moved to America. I wrote to her for about four years and then my letters were never replied to so she must have died”.

“I will now tell you about my mother's family as I have told you about my father My grandfather was William Barlow who was a schoolmaster. He moved his family to the south of England going into the same business as a schoolmaster Then he heard about a gold rush in New Zealand and so he packed up his family and went there. He didn't go mining but set up a trading post and sold food and supplies to the miners, but the natives could not see the miners getting all the gold so they started to attack. The troops had to be sent from England and my father happened to be one of those soldiers sent there”.

NOTES

By Kerrie Blyth

This recording was made just three years before William died in 1967. Charlie Webb sent me an edited version of it in 1985, and as mentioned, I found it to be fascinating, and I am extremely grateful Charlie decided to give me a copy.

Family tree

William Barlow 1802-1883

Eliza Sutor Barlow 1841 - [1920] married 1866 in New Zealand to *William Walter Geal* 1841

Children were Elizabeth, Margaret, Mary, William (speaker on the tape) and Louisa (Charlie's mother)

William Barlow did not take his young family to New Zealand, instead, he went to Van Diemen's Land.

The family story was that William Barlow's second wife (Eliza's stepmother) was very mean to the children and had tried to first poison them and then set fire to the house to burn them! The transcript said that Eliza was willing to do anything or go anywhere to get away. Eliza left Hobart in 1861 with her sister Margaret Wiseman.

The aunt that William wrote to when he lived in America would have to have been either Mary Howarth Barlow or Margaret Barlow who married James Wiseman. There was a suggestion from Charlie that the aunt lived in India so it wouldn't have been Mary or Margaret.

Barlow-Geal Family History

It was the Maori Wars that prompted the Army to send troops to NZ to quell the uprising. William Geal sailed from England to NZ with his regiment. He met Eliza Sutor Barlow probably in Auckland and they married in 1866. I have the original marriage certificate.

William Barlow's will stated that the proceeds of rent or sale of his property "The Hermitage" at Swansea be divided between his four children, William, Margaret, Mary and Eliza. This is the money Eliza would have invested in the Milk Company in London, however I don't know that it was a large sum as the tape suggests.

The cassette is in my care.

Kerrie Blyth

Devonport, Tasmania