



# George & Sarah



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# ~ George and Sarah ~

Sailed from Plymouth U.K., 21 August, 1852, in sailing ship "Seapark", carrying 350 people under command of Captain Thomas Speding.

Arrived in South Australia, 12 December, 1852, after a fine voyage of sixteen weeks.

George Stacey married Sarah (nee Gothed) at Taunton, England, 4 September, 1834, in the Dreighton Parish Church, Somerset.

Family at the time of arrival in South Australia -

Fanny	(15 years)
Charles	(14 years)
Unity	(10 years)
William	( 7 years)
Caroline	( 5 years)
Thomas	( 3 years)

Family born in South Australia -

Mary Maria  
Sarah

The Stacey history highlights the strength of purpose and determination that was needed to motivate people in the early 1800's to travel 13,000 miles across the world from England to Australia. This account features George and Sarah Stacey who decided to uproot themselves from the farming country of Somerset and leave their English way of life behind them to start again in Australia.

England in the early 1800's was following with interest the settlements and developments of the first colonies of N.S.W. and Tasmania. Newspapers in the early 1800's were also featuring announcements by the London Colonial Office of the new colony of South Australia to be developed by free settlers. It was proposed that it would be administered by appointed Governors from England.

The lure of a non-convict colony would have appealed strongly to many and understandably it added to the will of those considering migration. In the 1840's notices appeared in the newspapers stating that certain ships destined for the colonies would be leaving Portsmouth on named dates. The Colonial Office called for applicants stating the qualifications that were required. For example it referred to married men with families. Trades required were farmers with stock raising experience, carpenters, masons, saddlers, shoemiths, wheelrights and men with administration ability.

This was the time of literary awakening in England. It was also the era of a new upsurgence of religious fervour. Persons of strong purpose found the challenge of life in a new land appealing and no doubt that was the case with our ancestors George and Sarah Stacey.

George and Sarah Stacey were married in the Dreighton Parish Church in 1834. Dreighton is a village near Taunton in the county of Somerset. George was 44 years old when he decided to migrate to South Australia with his family. By that time his family were ranging in age from 15 years old down to 3 years old. His wife Sarah, then 35 years old had borne him six children, three boys (Charles 14, William 7 and Thomas 3) and three girls (Fanny 15, Unity 10 and Caroline 5).

On August the 21st, 1852, the family left England on the sailing ship the Seapark, taking nearly three months to reach South Australia on the 12th of December, 1852. On arrival they managed to acquire a bullock and dray and travelled 20km south of Adelaide to McLaren Vale.

George Stacey initially worked for Mr. Charles Hewett. The Hewetts had taken up land at McLaren Vale in 1839, grazing sheep and cattle. This introduction to stock-keeping in Australia must have been an important learning experience for George Stacey. It probably gave him the necessary knowledge in animal raising which enabled him to take up land of his own four years after arriving in Australia. He in fact acquired 300 acres of semi-hilly land along the coast at Myponga Beach. George and Sarah and family of eight moved in 1858, in horse drawn dray and trolley to Myponga Beach, a farming and grazing settlement which had begun in the 1840's. It was the start of an important period in the family's life and their introduction to the South Australian environment. By this time the children were fast approaching young adulthood. Fanny was 21 years, Charles 20 years, Unity 16 years and William 13 years. The others were Caroline 11 years, Thomas 10 years and two children born in Australia, Mary Maria 5 years, and Sarah 3 years.

South Australian history of this time records the great importance of food and cereal grain production which supplied flour and stock foods which South Australia required for its own needs and also for export. At that time the colony's finances were in a serious situation. It was only the quick aptitude and the adaption by the first settlers to the Australian farming and grazing conditions which produced products that were able to be shipped directly to the Victorian gold diggings of the 1850's and 60's, bolstering South Australia's earnings.

This explains the early development of the areas including Myponga Beach, that could be serviced by sea by the building of jetties at Willunga, Myponga Beach, Victor Harbor, Port Elliott, Normanville, Second Valley and Rapid Bay. The jetty at Myponga was not completed until 1859.

We learn that eight or more settlers on the Myponga Beach flats in the early 1840's were producing cereal grains, potatoes, wattle bark (chopped up by hand and bagged) and whiskey made from spring water. This produce was shipped by the small coastal sailing boats, putting into Myponga Beach on the high tide and being loaded direct from drays at low tide.

The soils of Fleurieu Peninsula grew excellent crops of good yields until the storage of phosphate content in the soil became exhausted after ten to twelve years of cropping. It was then that the settlers of sheep and stock raising experience, such as the Staceys, took over from the earlier farmers.

All over the Fleurieu Peninsula, large landholders were taking over from the small landholders of the farming phase of South Australia's early history. Sheep and cattle remained the main economy of the Fleurieu Peninsula while grain farming spread across the gulf to Yorke Peninsula and later into the mid-north when land became available there in the 1870's.

It was during the late 1860's and into the 1870's that the Stacey family purchased some of the properties being vacated by the earlier settlers allowing the Staceys to extend the grazing potential of their hilly sections. Records tell us that Thomas, who was about to be married, first bought out an area in 1875 with a further purchase of land with a homestead in 1878, the time he was to be married.

The development of Myponga Beach itself as a settlement can be seen from education records through the last half of the 1800's. Education records show that the settlers' children numbered up to 40 pupils of school age in the peak period of that time, in 1850's and 1860's, when a three-roomed stone cottage was used as a school, and also a place of worship. In 1866 a Christian Bible Chapel built of stone, adjacent to the three-roomed cottage became the community place of worship.

In the 1870's school numbers had declined and the cottage was used as a private school, for some years conducted by a Mr. F. Boys. It was later re-opened in 1889 by which time the Staceys and two other remaining landholders had 33 children of school age. (A photo taken early in the 1900's is shown in the Book of Churches of the Fleurieu Peninsula, completed by the Yankalilla and District Historical Society).

It is known that some of the Myponga Beach settlers moved their families and farm implements across St. Vincent's Gulf in the ketches that served these coastal farming areas of the 1840's to 1900's.

While land bought by the Stacey family at Myponga Beach is still held today by members of the Stacey family, by the late 1870's and in to the 1890's, many members of the family of George and Sarah began to move to other parts of Australia. They went to the mid-north, the West Coast of South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

The upbringing of George and Sarah Stacey was from a strong religious background. A book on churches of the Fleurieu Peninsula by the Yankalilla and District Historical Society contains a photo of the Bible Christian Church built by the settlers in 1866.

After the movement of many of the population, the Stacey family continued their worship with the Bible Christian Church at Yankalilla. When the second Bible Christian Church was built in 1878-9 the Staceys supplied and carted the stone from the Myponga Jetty area. Together with Myponga Jetty's other remaining settlers, they burnt lime for this new and larger church. At the 70th anniversary of the building of this church, a porch was added and the foundation stone was laid by Mrs. Betsy Stacey, wife of Thomas Stacey, whose family had been so active in the work and witness of the church, firstly at Myponga Jetty and later at Yankalilla.

# *-Points of interest-*

George and Sarah's sea voyage had its moments. It is reported that one of their sons went aloft, and whilst climbing was found to be at one stage out over the water. It is said that after much coaxing from his parents he was finally brought to attention on the deck and was probably put into detention for the remainder of the voyage.

History tells us that George, Sarah and family moved on to McLaren Vale by bullock dray soon after arrival. Compared to today's travel we no doubt wonder that 16 years after our State's Foundation Ceremony, (28th December, 1836) bullocks would be used for such a trip. The answer is in the following incident from South Australia's early history, which reported how in the 1840's, an immigrating English Barrister brought with him his English carriage and horses, and in attempting to travel to McLaren Vale, proceeded as far as Sturt Creek where his carriage capsized, breaking both carriage and harness.

On reading about South Australia's development difficulties we are told that vegetation, trees and creeks and some rivers (as we call them) and the herbage frontage of Fleurieu Peninsula made movement by land quite hazardous. Until labour and time was available to make cuttings and build bridges, the many steep sided creeks slowed progress, so bullocks were used because they were better able to secure a footing and pull loads that horses could not manage. They could also live off the natural grasses and herbage more so than horses.

Those who know the Fleurieu Peninsula (south of Adelaide to Cape Jervis) can readily understand why the Willunga Jetty was built, likewise Myponga Beach, Normanville, Second Valley, Rapid Bay, Pt. Elliott, Encounter Bay and Cape Jervis. They were built because of the access development by sea going ketches and coastal ships.

It is noted that William Stacey, George and Sarah's second son, in his teen years of the 1860's, became active in athletic sports, and it is said that the Stacey family returned to McLaren Vale annually for many years, for the Christmas and New Year period of Sports Day gatherings which were held on New Year's Day each year.

William was successful in winning events in walking, running and pole jumping. Perhaps this explains why it has been said by William's descendants that when you walked with Grandfather; if in front you had to look out for his feet, if behind you had to run to keep up.

Postal services were inaugurated in the late 1860's to Myponga and Yankalilla. The mail for Myponga Beach was carried over the hills from Myponga on horseback by Thomas Stacey, third son of George and Sarah, who was 10 years of age. The Post Office at Myponga Beach was conducted from one of the settler's homes.

It was George Stacey's good fortune that the earlier settler whom he worked for was actively engaged in sheep grazing and cattle raising which he had begun in early 1840's. It was this experience in stock that was to later dominate the Stacey activities for several generations, giving them the confidence needed, as farming land became grain sick and uneconomic for farming so was available to make up larger holdings, needed for stock grazing and wool growing.

The Stacey property with its hilly back country behind Myponga Beach, now with this more arable land, (taken over from these early farmers), then became a viable wool growing and fat stock producing proposition supported by grain production for either stock use or sale.

It is from this background that three remaining pioneer families who between the late 1870's - 1890's comprised of 30 school age children, added a further contribution by pioneering settlers to many other parts of Australia, namely - mid-North S.A., Upper North S.A., West Coast S.A., Central N.S.W., farming areas of Victoria, S.A. Mallee country and the Wagin area of Western Australia.

It is interesting to note that Western Australia has honoured her pioneering women by erecting a bronze statue called "Woman and Child" which is situated in the fountain lake in Kings Park, Perth, W.A.. Mrs. Isobel Ness, who was the daughter of George and Sarah's third son Thomas, has her name recorded on this memorial. Isobel married Robert Ness, who pioneered farming in the Wagin area of Western Australia in the 1890's. They had five children, Robert, Allan, Archibald, Grace and Laurel.

The tragedy that did not happen - but close enough! Some years after Thomas was married, a fruit and vegetable garden on a Myponga Beach property was under construction, at the foot of a gully on the Myponga River approximately 1/2 km from the Stacey home.

From the story handed down, it appears that Thomas was using blasting powder to blow a large tree trunk apart, for the making of posts to fence in the garden area. He inserted the powder charges, but the explosion did not occur in the time usually allowed for this to happen, so after waiting a little longer than usual, he approached the log but as he got nearer, the charge went off, injuring Thomas enough to put him in bed for three months. Two of his sons, George and Hugh, who were with him, thought he was dead.

South Australian history records that the first settlers arrived at Myponga Beach as early as 1841, and that by 1844 seven families were farming the flats adjacent to Myponga Beach at the mouth of the Myponga River. The area produced good yields of grain and vegetables such as potatoes, which were shipped to Adelaide. Like many S.A. agricultural areas, after 15-20 years of continuous cropping, the land had become deficient in phosphate. This problem was to become very much a factor in S.A.'s cereal productivity, causing these earlier farmers to move on to new areas. Their properties were then taken over by those who wished to make larger areas for stock grazing and supplement farming.

Records state that the Yankalilla District was serviced by the Normanville Jetty, completed in 1850. This area was rapidly settled in these early vital years of S.A.'s development. The district and township of Yankalilla was fifth on the S.A. Country Town list at that time, having an area population reaching 5,000 in the 1890's.

As noted in another section of this book, activities of Stacey descendants tells that Hugh Stacey, second son of Thomas Stacey spent some years as Harbour Master, Shipping Agent, also grain, bark and chaff Merchant in 1918-19.

The writer of this article who was six years of age at this time, has clear memories of the shipping activities. The coastal ship "Freeselector" was servicing Normanville at that time.

The usual procedure was for the ship to berth at high tide and to sit on her keel, tied to the jetty whilst being unloaded and reloaded, and be ready to sail at next high tide of the day. Sometimes the loading of outward freight, grain, wattle bark, etc., by horsedrawn rail trolleys would be progressing too slowly, and, on a day of rising waves, the ketch would rise and fall with a thump on the sea bottom. If this happened the Captain, who feared for the hull of his ship, would roar, swear and threaten vengeance on the ship's loaders to speed up loading, and often pulling out before loading was finished, completing the finale to the ship's visit.

The writer's research into happenings and anecdotes concerning the repeated references to the ever untiresome spirit of the early settlers and the Stacey family, has left its message of courage and determination, and the bond of Christian influence, which motivated their activities in the support of the Church.

The Christian revival of England and Europe in the 17-1800's was carried on to Australia by the early settlers, who passed on their fervour to future generations.

It seems there was a church erected by settlers in every named settlement, which was usually within long walking distance, or easy horse travelling distance from each other.

## EARLY MYPONGA JETTY

Readers may be interested in the early history of the Myponga Jetty and the three pioneer families who lived close by.

The building for the jetty was included as one of the Public Works and passed by the first State Parliament formed in 1857, and which was opened for shipping in 1859.

It was built of strong red gum sawn from trees growing in the locality, the decking being of planks seven by two feet, the outer end of the top decking was of oregon planks of the same measurements. The jetty was heavily tarred and a crane to lift two tons was installed at the outer end for handling cargo.

On the morning of the jetty opening, bullock drays came down the steep hill roads, some with she-oak dragging behind to help steady them. In the drays were women and children with the men driving a team of six oxen.

On that occasion a bullock was killed and roasted whole for the day's barbecue, in addition there were gallons of mead, a beverage made of soaked grain and honey. A band of musicians came from Aldinga and Yankalilla to provide music for dancing on the green, and singing.

The Myponga River, which runs into the sea near the old Myponga Jetty (on which the Myponga Reservoir has since been built six miles up stream) was tested and analysed continually for 12 month periods before its erection, and was declared to be the purest water in the State.

The first three spans of the jetty went in 1900 when a schooner-rigged fishing boat "Lord Roberts" was blown ashore in a severe storm. The boat struck the outer end and gave the first blow to her breaking up. The crane is still under the water.

The old jetty, like the pioneer men and women who were at the opening is now no more. Within one mile of the jetty on farming and grazing land, there lived in 1870, the families the Sampsons, the Staceys and the Eatts and between them they has 32 children.

By 1912 most of them were grown up and ready to go out on their own and by 1920 nine young men and 2 young women had settled at Kimba on Eyre Peninsula. They survived many hardships and setbacks when the 1930 grain prices declined but continued farming until their children grew up and took over.

The old Stacey property at Myponga Beach is now owned by Ian Stacey, a member of the third generation.