

The Okinya Wilcox's
Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER 1

The children of Joseph Wilcox, tailor, who went to Australia.

Continuing the story from “**The Early Wilcox History**”

Thomas, the eldest son, was apprenticed to a Linen Draper and Costumiers, Gerard's at St Neots. He was the first of this family to come to Australia, probably about 1856, with his father's friend, William Barker. Apparently old Joseph gave Thomas 500 pounds to go into business with Barker. They went to Gawler, in South Australia, possibly because Barker had friends there. In 1857 he married one of the girl apprentices Priscilla Heyden. Evidently it was not long till they got into trouble in their business in Australia.

Emery the third son was sent by old Joseph in 1857 to Gawler to clean up matters. However, Emery was a drunk and made things worse.

Emery had disappeared, but later was heard of in Sydney where he had married in 1863 Caroline Elizabeth Fairy. Nothing much is known about him, but he possibly followed his father as a Tailor. He had 4 daughters, two of which married brothers named Douglas, both in the machine Dept of the Sydney Morning Herald, and a son. The son went into the NSW Survey Dept and was articled to a Mr Koeford then in charge of the Wagga district. Koeford spoke very well of the youngster, but he did not use the name of Wilcox then, though Koeford knew of it.

Whilst Emery's children were quite young, he disappeared again, this time for good. He was believed to have gone to South Africa and lost there.

It is not known why his wife and the family did not continue under the Wilcox name, nor what name they used.

Thomas and his younger brother, Emery, and business partner, Barker, were in a drapery business together in Gawler, South Australia. The business got into financial trouble, facing bankruptcy.

George, the second son.

In 1857, at the age of 19, George left Liverpool for Australia on board the ‘Royal Charter’. (‘The Royal Charter’ was launched that year as a new type of ship having steam engines which could be used in the absence of suitable winds. She was considered a fast ship, taking passengers and cargo from Liverpool to Australia under 60 days.) *The Royal Charter was wrecked in 1859 on the Welsh coast in a wild Force 12 storm, which became known as ‘the Royal Charter Storm’. Over 400 passengers drowned.*

George's first idea was to go to Sydney where he had friends from Leicester (Keeps, Geards, Schlenkers, Parsons), but his father in 1858, had requested him to go to Adelaide to help the business get out of financial trouble and avoid bankruptcy. George had been given £100 to help and given a free hand to go to Gawler and ‘properly clean up the job, fire Thomas and Emery, and Barker, and sell up.

George arrived in Melbourne late in 1858 ex Auxiliary Steamer ‘Great Britain’, (which caught fire between Melbourne and Adelaide the following year) and travelled on to Adelaide in March 1859 on the coastal steamer ‘Admella’. (The Admella was wrecked on the next voyage, off the coast from Mt Gambier and most of the people lost.) George having had experience in the grocery business in Leicester took over the business in Gawler as J & G Wilcox and was successful. Gawler was the nearest big town to the City and to Port Adelaide, and all the traffic of the big

The Okinya Wilcox's Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

copper mines from Burra-Burra and Kapunda had to pass through Gawler. At this time there had been talk of building a railway from Port Adelaide to Gawler to catch the Copper Mine traffic. George believed that the establishment of a General Store could be a most successful business.

In the same year he established a small grocery business in Murray Street Gawler. Having money of his own, he proposed to go into full partnership with his father, old Joseph.

Two years later he merged with the Barker & Wilcox drapery to develop it into a general business based on grocery and drapery under the name of 'J & G Wilcox'. (*Notes taken from article from City of Adelaide website: Rich and Famous*)

His father, Joseph, was the financial partner, but he never came to Australia. The enterprise became extremely successful.

In 1858/1859 George opened a grocery business, merging in 1860 with his father's general store keeping business under the title of J and G Wilcox Merchants.

In 1860 George Wilcox was buying wool, skins, gum bark, wheat, flour and gold, or rather taking these products in barter for stores and shipping them for sale to his father, Joseph Wilcox, in England, where the proceeds were used to buy English goods for the store-keeping business. “

Joseph jnr. the 4th son at age 12, in 1856 was sent to George in Gawler to work on the drapery side of the business. He travelled with Priscilla Heyden who went to Australia to marry Thomas. George had to provide for young Joe and took him into the shop. Joe became very experienced working in this job for 12 years from 1860-1872.

In 1872 Joseph Wilcox bought the business (J & G Wilcox) from his brother George.

In 1878 he married Eliza Jane Mayfield in Adelaide.

George with the hope of finding a wife, returned to England in 1863/4 in a ship called 'Murray' commanded by Captain John Legoe.

Quoting from Sidney Wilcox's letter - 'Sailing ships usually left about September – November to have the summer weather round the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn. George and a Captain John Legoe (*Sidney Wilcox refers to Capt John Legoe as 'father of our Legoe'.*) It is assumed the son is a family friend or acquaintance took passage in the 'Murray'. Unknown to one another, both had got a big mob of birds and animals on board. Legoe had wondered why George had hired 3 cabins. The Agents didn't tell him why.

'When Legoe saw the live stock going aboard there was the devil of a storm – and he could swear – but could not alter the matter. However they were not such bad pals in the end.'

George left the ship at Plymouth, hurried to London and sold his collection to Jamrack's, and Captain Legoe to take second place at lesser money. That's been a joke with us all right up to today. Anyhow as you see the acquaintance opened up to partnership and life long friendship of the Wilcox,s and Legoe's.

On several occasions George took Australian birds on board ship, caring for them on his way to England in a cabin that he had converted for the journey.

The Okinya Wilcox's
Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER 2
George Wilcox (snr.)

1863 While in England **George** married Anne Fuller. Annie lived on Manor Farm, St Neots. She was born in the village of Eynesbury, Bedfordshire, which today is a suburb of St Neots, now a regional town that spans the boundaries of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.

George met Annie Fuller, daughter of Thomas Fuller, a fairly large farmer on the farm 'Caldicote', rented from the Duke of Rutland's family. It was something over 300 acres, and is mentioned in the 'Domesday Book'. George and his family visited the property many times, the children being very fond of 'old GFF' (Grandfather Fuller).

Thomas Fuller was married to an American Rebecca Green, of Greene County, state of New York. They had 4 daughters and 2 sons. Annie's sister Mary had married Eb Bedells, who had been apprenticed alongside George with Bedells senior at Leicester. The youngest daughter Emily married a Nicholson and had no family.

One of the sons of Thomas Fuller went to Bolivia and was supposed to have married a rich native wife, then got killed in a Bolivia-Peru scrap. The other son, George died at about 33, unmarried.

George Wilcox married Anne on 20th July 1864

Only a few weeks later, in August 1864, they boarded the brand new lavishly furnished clipper ship 'City of Adelaide' on her maiden voyage, to sail for South Australia and to set up home in Gawler, South Australia. George and Annie Wilcox were passengers on the first voyage of the 'City of Adelaide'. The cabin they occupied is not known.

George set up a new business in South Australia, Geo. Wilcox and Co, as a wool and produce merchant, specializing in hides and skins.

The success of George Wilcox's first business was based on his acumen in buying and importing goods from Britain and Europe, and selling them in South Australia. At least two large shipments of goods were sent from London to the Wilcox business in Gawler on the 'City of Adelaide'. 636 packages in 1864 and 492 cases in 1865.

FAMILY OF GEORGE WILCOX Snr.

George Wilcox:

Born: 3rd October 1838, St Neots, Huntingdonshire, England

Died: 5th Sept. 1917, Adelaide

Married: 20 Jul 1864 Anne Fuller, (b 1840 Graffham near St Neots, England, d. 13 April 1897 Adelaide)

Children: Edith, b 12 May 1866, d 1933

Sidney George, b 25 August 1869, d 1942

Nellie, b 24 Dec 1867, d 13 Sept. 1950

Twins – stillborn

George Seaborne, b 30 Jan 1873, d 14 July 1915

Murray, b 10 Nov 1874, d 29 August 1847

The Okinya Wilcox's Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

George, in 1872, sold his Gawler interests to his brother Joseph, and moved his family to live in Adelaide where he purchased a mansion on 14 acres of land in Lower Mitcham (now known as Kingswood). He bought the house from William M Letchford, and named it *Eynesbury* (see separate chapter '*Eynesbury*') after the village in which Annie grew up.

1872 In September George and Annie returned to England on the 'City of Adelaide' with their children Edith, Sidney and Nellie. The voyage to Plymouth took about 140 days. They occupied Cabin No 2 on the aft side. "The ship was to have gone by the way of Cape of Good Hope, but the winds would not allow of it, and the ship having been drifted so far south, the Captain decided to go by Cape Horn.

On this voyage George had hired Cabins 4 and 6 which he had fitted up with cages, for thousands of Shell-parrots, Spotted lovebirds, Blue and Red Finches, Galahs, and a few White & Yellow crested Cockatoos.

It was said he had a couple of tons of seed to feed them on, and he had to make special provision for drinking water for them. I do remember, though I was only 4 years old helping to feed and water the birds, and clean the cages – a quantity of sand had been put on board to keep the cages decently clean." (*Letter from Sidney Wilcox to Alan Wilcox, May 1938*)

George and Annie's second son, George Wilcox, was born in Cabin No 2 on 30th January 1873, just off the Scilly Isles. Hence they chose his middle name to be 'Seaborne'.

When the ship arrived off Lands End, George decided, with others, to leave the ship and land at Penzance, Cornwall. He took young Sidney with him, together with his birds, which he planned to sell in London before the ship arrived at Dock. They disembarked to the Pilot boat, and then went by train to London. The train journey took 48 hours to London and another 6 or 7 hours to St Neots, where his mother lived. "Anyway about 3 nights on the way – and little 'Jimmy' (Sidney) was pretty grimed out black by the time he got to Grandma in St Neots. She shoved him into a hot bath and soaped him – in a moment or two she rushed out calling "Joe, Joe, the child is as white as our own – not the little nigger we expected!"

George intended to live in England as he had £27,000 on which to retire but the family did not want to stay. George had very few friends left in England, and he found it cold. The children also found it 'ugly cold and dreary', all crying out for sunshine.

1874 It was decided that Annie and the 4 children should return to Adelaide in the old ship, 'City of Adelaide' at the end of May 1874. On the evening of 24th August the ship was stranded on the coast at 'Kircaldy Beach' (near Henley Beach), driven by a severe westerly gale. The passengers were taken off after 48 hours by a steam tug. George had arrived earlier by P & O Mail and was on the beach at 10.00am on 25th August, but could not help.

The family went to lodgings in Angas Street, Adelaide, and about the end of September got a 2-story semi-detached house near the corner of South Terrace E and Hanson Street SE. George and Annie's third son, Murray was born here on 10th November 1874.

The Okinya Wilcox's Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

Despite having little money, his ability, tireless energy, and resourcefulness quickly won for him a prominent place in the commercial life of South Australia. (*Newspaper article re 'Late Mr G Wilcox'*)

His knowledge of the goods needed in the new colony enabled him, with the assistance of his father, (who remained living in England) to build up a large import business as well as to arrange the export of wool, hides and frozen meat to England.

At one time they secured a big consignment of bacon and tried to sell it in a part of the far east where no pig was eaten. It had to be brought back.

George Snr. intermittently bought wool, skins, and so on for shipment to England

In 1876 George met William Mofflin. A partnership was entered into, and the firm of William Mofflin and Co established, and carried on until June 1889.

In 1878 George was very ill with Bright's disease. (Chronic inflammation of the blood vessels in the kidney). His young son, George, was also very ill, with what today might be called infantile paralysis. Financially they could only manage a monthly nurse and a bit of help from a 'general girl'. Ede (Edith) who was 9 ½ had to take care of young George, and Sidney, 8 ½ had to look after Murray as best he could.

"... of all the pesky kids that ever came into the world, well 'Nip' (Murray) was that one. Poor little beggar, tho he couldn't help all that, it was his bad luck to appear on the stage at that time. I, Sidney have often wondered why I did not drop him on the brick floor of the kitchen when he had a pesky fit, and break his neck, and be quite of the nuisance. For 2 years or more Ede and I did not have much of a childhood in such a hurly-burly. ... Nell of course could push a Go-Cart, but in those days it was a double side-by-side seat pram, pretty heavy – and I think Nell was a bit of a sticker – any way she used to land 'Nip' a few heavy ones, and he never cared much for Nell! I dare say I might have landed him some too – you see as time went on – George and Murray being closer in years, palled up – and rather drifted away from the 3 older ones – and there were constant scraps."

? to 1887 Sidney Wilcox first employment was with a firm of grocers then he entered the services of the old Commercial Bank of South Australia. He then went into the office of Messrs. George Wilcox & Co., and was the only clerk employed there at the time.

Annie suffered a good deal from Asthma. The family decided that South Terrace was not a healthy site for any of them, so in 1881 they moved to the "Enyesbury" in Mitcham. Annie was a good deal better there and died of heart trouble in April 1897.

The company, Geo. Wilcox and Co, proved very successful and eventually branches were opened in Queensland, Melbourne and Albany in Western Australia. In 1886 a branch was set up in Young Street, Sydney. With the success and expansion of this branch, George closed the Victorian and Western Australian branches.

In 1888 A branch of Wilcox Mofflin was opened in Sydney, and this was the beginning of a chain of offices and branches throughout Australia. A few months later a branch was opened in Melbourne.

When in Leicester, England George was friends with Gerard, Keen and Parsons. Keen and Parsons became partners in Sydney in Hardware & Ironmongery. Parsons, a bachelor, became blind and

The Okinya Wilcox's
Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

died about 1896 or early 1897. Mrs Gerard, the Keens and Parsons were great friends. (*Notes from Sidney Wilcox letter dated May 1938*)

They went into partnership with a Mr Hamilton, a ship's captain, so were able to get into anything to do with shipping.

By 1899 he was the largest exporter of frozen lamb in Australia.

George Wilcox Snr. bought Chollerton in 1899, a large property in Darling Point, Sydney. Sidney asked Mrs Gerard to superintend the furnishing. She suggested the family hire a capable House Keeper, and recommended a young woman, Mrs Mason, for the job. (Mrs Mason had been Parsons' Housekeeper until he died.)

1889 George Seaborne, at age 16, was put into the company, George Wilcox & Co. George was sent from Adelaide to manage office of Wilcox Mofflin in Sydney. Later a big wool store and offices built at Glebe, then George Wilcox & Co. wool merchants.

He boarded at "Chollerton" (Malcolm's Folly) at Darling Point, Sydney. He and brother Murray ventured into brick works at Bondi. (A failure).

George and his father managed to buy up large tracts of land in South Australia.. In 1908 they owned the 1,000 acre *Koonamore* sheep station with 40,000 sheep managing to run 1 sheep to 11 acres.

In 1889 George set up a partnership with his eldest son, Sidney, aged 20, and G G Legoe. George withdrew from active participation in 1894 (aged 56) and two other sons, George Seaborne and Murray joined the partnership.

In 1902 he bought 1,000 bales of lambs wool and made £20,000.

During a big meat strike he started a factory to tin rabbits and sold 45 tons. At one time he shipped 100,000 lamb carcasses to England.

In a letter to the editor of The Sydney Morning Herald, 24th March, 1910, George expressed his dismay at the possible introduction of an export duty on hides. Quote:
'Sir, may I encroach on your valuable space again and implore those such as pastoralists, farmers, producers, meat works proprietors, butchers and exporters, to wake up early and have their say to the heavy handed export duty that a mere handful of men (tanners)? are clamouring to posed on hides and calf skins ...? 'Herald' report page 3, March 22, 1910(?) of deputation of tanners (?) to the Federal Prime Minister.

Any export duty would be a fatal error and a sin for very many reasons, chief among which are: That producers etc employ many hundreds of times (?) more labour than tanners, and ever will do so. So why penalise(?) the producer, as assuredly if any export duty is clapped on any commodity it will come out of the pocket of the producer and, further run any ...? man dispute the fact that producers and exports are the very life of our country. If imports crept up over exports how foolish we would look. Is not every country at the moment fighting for its export trade. So, to sum the question up shortly, export duty simply spells "ruin". It would be far greater sense to talk "bonus"

The Okinya Wilcox's
Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

to help along production rather than retard it.
March 24. I am etc. George Wilcox.'

George made at least thirteen trips back to England to closely supervise each end of his continental trade. Annie and the children often travelled with him, to visit family in Eynesbury and St Neots. Occasionally she returned on another ship, with or without George.

George lived at Eynesbury, Lower Mitcham. His house was covered with Wisteria and opened annually for exhibition of Wisteria. More in Chapter 3 - EYNESBURY.

He made a trust for son George's children at his death in 1915 – all under 15 at the time.

The rest of his estate was left to Sid and Murray but capital tied up for 21 years after his death. In 1899 he bought 3 blocks at Darling Point in Sydney for the 3 sons. Sidney drew Chollerton with a big 4 story house called (Captain) Malcolm's Folly. Murray drew middle block (Yatalunga) and George drew end block (Okinya). Later George built houses for Murray and George, at cost of about £2,000 each.

FAMILY OF GEORGE SEABORN WILCOX – The Okinya Wilcox's

George Seaborne Wilcox

Born: 30 Jan 1873 at sea, registered in England
Died: 15 Jul 1915 Sydney
Married: 23 Aug 1899 Constance Navena Welman (b. 20 Oct 1878, Wagga Wagga. Australia)
Children: Rita 1900
Alan 1903
Vera (Poppy) 1905
Jean 1909
Jack 1911

Note: In the State Library of Sth Aust. there is a history of the Adelaide shops written by Geoffrey Manning. He mentions that Thos Wilcox & Co's drapery store is described in the Register, 29 September 1876, p 5a

The Okinya Wilcox's Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

Chollerton, Yatlalunga and Okinya

According to a historical document from Yarranabbe Gardens Ltd, the land the apartment building stands on was originally part of a seven-acre block. The land was purchased from the crown for 365 pounds in 1833 by ex-convict and businessman Joseph Wyatt.

Two years later, Wyatt sold the land for a healthy profit to the Surveyor General, Thomas Mitchell (marked as the owner on this very early map). By 1853, a retired sea captain (sometimes referred to as a smuggler), John Cleland Malcolm, had built a home on the property known as “Malcolm’s Folly” or “Captain’s Folly” near a freshwater spring. It was unfinished for many years and reputedly had treasure buried on the grounds. Both the name “Malcolm” and the spring are clearly marked on a map of landholdings from 1861 and look out onto “Emily Bay”.

In the late 1800s, Proceedings of the Australian Historical Society reveal the property was renamed “Chollerton”.

A news article from 1896 describes a visit to the home, which by then was run as Miss Hathorn’s girls school:

“Chollerton commands a fine view of the harbour, is situated near the water, though standing high above it, and the grounds which are well wooded and laid out in terraces from the road to the water’s edge, terminate in a long water frontage with private pier and beach. There is a tennis court, a large swimming bath, and plenty of recreation ground where the girls delight to take their exercise. On the evening in question I was, shown round this charming home by one of the girls who finds life very pleasant on the Yarranabbe Road, and we saw the cow which provides the milk and the chickens which were destined for the next day’s dinner.”

By 1899, Chollerton was owned by George Wilcox, who subdivided its land into three parcels, which he split between his three sons. Chollerton went to Sidney; Murray received Yatalunga, while George Junior received the westerly block named ‘Okinya’ (the aboriginal name for ‘well’).

By 1912, Chollerton had been sold to George Julius. Born in the UK, George was a mechanical engineer and inventor. He was knighted in 1929. While living at Chollerton, Julius and his wife hosted fashion parades (photos exist in the State Library of NSW), garden parties, charity events and fetes featuring exhibitions of George’s much-talked-about model electric city.

The Okinya Wilcox's
Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER 3 - EYNESBURY

In 1872 George sold his Gawler interests to his brother Joseph, and moved his family to live in Adelaide where he purchased a mansion on 14 acres of land – 69 Belair Road, in Lower Mitcham (now known as Kingswood). He bought the house from William M Letchford, and named it *Eynesbury* after the village in which Annie grew up.



George extended and enhanced the building significantly, with a Victorian / Italianate influence.

George maintained the beautiful grounds of Eynesbury. His house was covered with Wisteria and when in full bloom he opened the property annually for public viewing.

The Adelaide Advertiser (September 1902) describes the plant as being ‘recognized as being the finest of its kind in the State. Although it covers approximately 1,200 square feet of the building, the Wisteria continues to extend itself lavishly, cloaking the wall of the house in a lovely garment of delicate heliotrope. Mr Wilcox may well be congratulated on having such a charming setting for his residence. Mr Wilcox intimates that people who would like to see it are at liberty to enter his garden during the day time for the purpose.’

In addition the gardens were much admired when he hosted a garden fete in aid of Stow Church.

At some stage Eynesbury was owned by the Hare Krishna Movement and used as their place of worship.

Eynesbury was registered as a secondary school in 1990 and became a specialist Secondary College for years 10, 11 and 12. However by 1995 the school had outgrown the Kingswood campus and opened a second campus in the city. By 2001 the school consolidated at the one campus in the city.

The Okinya Wilcox's
Part 2 - WILCOX'S IN AUSTRALIA

Eynesbury today

The grounds have been reduced to 2 acres from the former 14 and the surrounding area has been swallowed by suburbia. Although the driveways and garden have been altered, fortunately the house has survived with little change to the architectural design making it a wonderful example of nineteenth century design. Its glory is now admired by elite customers as a House of Couture.

George Wilcox could well be proud that his home is now being used in the manner described from the website of 'Eynesbury House of Couture'.

Eynesbury House of Couture offers an experience that cannot be matched anywhere in Adelaide. From the moment you drive through the luscious groundsyou know you are in for the ultimate experience.

At Eynesbury House of Couture enjoy viewing our Bridal, Evening and Christening wear in ... the Princess Room. We offer a complimentary Rolls Royce on your day when purchasing from our couture collections. Enjoy a glass of French champagne while viewing of 80 different Eynesbury bridal gowns.....

Christening your child at Eynesbury House of Couture is second to none – silks, satin, smocked ... Italian lace, Swarovski crystal, antique French linen and crochet ...

The house is in the process of being listed on the Register of the National Estate but progress is delayed due to many documents relating to the house have been stored without dates.