

# Pioneer Families In The Hawksbury

## The McQuade Family

Roger Ryan	(1825 - 1912)
Caroline Chisholm	(1808 - 1877)
Phillip Tully	(1768 - ?)
John Yeomans	(1768 - 1837)
Laurance May	(1772 - 1837)
The Eather Family	
Mrs Nora Cupitt	(1890 - 1990)

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## The McQuade Family

Henry McQuade purchased William Cox's beautiful 'Fairfield' property at Clarendon while managing His Majesty's Theatre in Sydney. He added a handsome two-storey structure to accommodate the lavish entertainment that he provided, and in 1880, had Alfred Hunter build a pipe organ for installation in his new home. Tenders were called to erect the organ but the organ was donated to St Matthew's Church in 1882.

Henry was an avid supporter of sports, particularly of horse racing and cricket. In 1881, the All England XI played Hawkesbury - Nepean on a concrete, carpeted wicket set up at Fairfield for the event. A special train brought spectators from Sydney to watch the one and only visit made to the area by an international side.

He was also a colourful politician, employing fiery campaigning and electioneering techniques to win a seat for Windsor. In 1882, when Windsor was absorbed into the Hawkesbury electorate, he succeeded in his ambition.

In 1868, William McQuade donated to St Matthew's the statue of *Our Lady and Archbishop Polding* delivered his address (*'The Eye of Faith'*, p313 ff) on the occasion of its inauguration on 21st June.

William McQuade owned the building in George Street that was leased to the Bank of NSW and later sold to the bank for three thousand five hundred pounds. (£3500)

Other family members also played important roles on the political scene:

- Michael McQuade was elected in the first and only election of the Windsor District Council in May, 1844 - a council that dissolved with a debt of three hundred and forty five pounds;
- John Michael McQuade was elected to the Borough Council of Windsor and in 1873 caused a stir when he used his casting vote as Mayor to have Windsor Park renamed McQuade Park.

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## Mr Roger Ryan (B.1825 D.1912)

On 23rd June, 1912, Mr Roger Ryan of Pitt Town passed away after recurring bouts of bronchitis. Ryan came to Australia in 1840 on the 'Glenswillie', sailed under Captain Birdwhistle, leaving his Tipperary Irish home with his mother, his brother, Edward, and three sisters. (One sister, Mrs Richard Maher, was the licensee of the hotel which stood on the present site of the Carrington Hotel, Windsor. The other sisters were the late Mrs P. Butler Pymble and Mrs Maughan).

Young Ryan was hired off the ship by Blaxland, the explorer, to plough up the Salt Pans near Parramatta. The plough was an old fashioned wooden one, pulled by 12 bullocks. Ryan suggested that an iron plough would do more work, only requiring two horses, and so Blaxland and Ryan purchased the first iron plough used in NSW from the Sydney firm of Iredales.

Ryan's mother had settled in Kurrajong on Bishop's Farm, part of the present Garryowen Estate, so Ryan eventually joined her, taking on the job of drawing sawn timber for a man named Roberts. Most of the timber used in the old buildings of Richmond were drawn over the punt by Roger Ryan. He had one bullock in the shafts, and had many tales of adventures and accidents that happened while crossing the river in the punt.

He married the daughter of Hugh Geehan, from Freemans Reach, later renting Baldwins farm adjoining Conlans there. On one of his trips conveying produce to Sydney, he met up with Big Cooper, the notorious highwayman. Cooper sprang out, hitting Ryan with his gun, and in so doing broke the gun. Ryan grabbed the barrel, leaving the stock in Cooper's hands, and they fought. Cooper's nose was broken and before long he called a truce.

When the gold diggings began in 1851, Ryan began carrying on the mountains, so he and his wife returned to Kurrajong. He frequently met up with Ben Hall, but after doing Hall a good turn, Ben never let his gang rob Ryan. The fee for carrying goods was tow pounds per cwt, so Ryan was able to save a considerable amount of his earnings.

In 1865 he sold his property and bought a farm at Pitt Town flats from Patrick Mahony. He also acquired several other valuable properties, including Harts farm at Pitt Town, Smith's farm, Robinson's farm at Wilberforce, Geehan's farm (where his wife had been born at Freeman's Reach). Ryan was a keen judge of horseflesh and went in for breeding and dealing in horses.

He reared a large family, all held in great respect in the Hawkesbury. The eldest was Mrs T.B. Roberts, wife of the proprietor of the *Gunnedah Advertiser*. Next was Thomas Hugh John, J.P., who died 1899; Edward Sydney, William and Theresa (both of whom died young), Frank James, Emily, and Mrs Elphisten of Waverley.

His funeral, conducted at St Matthew's by Father McDonnell, was the largest seen in Windsor for many years. The church bell tolled throughout his internment into the family vault, while Father McDonnell spoke of the deceased's noble character and

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living example, not only to religious duties, but also to relations with his fellow men.

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## Caroline Chisholm (1808 - 1877)

Caroline Chisholm is one of Australia's most famous pioneers. Did you know that her work in Australia started here in Windsor, at the parish of St Matthew's?

Caroline Chisholm is remembered for her assistance to the many young women migrants who came to the colony in the 1830's. Without her intervention and support, these young women faced a life of destitution or even worse prospects in a remote colonial sea-port that was dirty and crowded and comprised mostly of males.

Employment opportunities for females were severely limited and many women were forced into prostitution. A significant change of direction occurred when Caroline and her husband arrived in the colony. Even as a young girl, Caroline Jones developed a vision of working to help others.

In 1830 at the age of 22 she married Captain Archibald Chisholm and when stationed with him in India, commenced a program to assist single girls attached to the base. When her husband became ill and took sick leave to recover, they came to Australia and moved into a small cottage in Windsor. This was 1838 when St Matthew's Parish was in its infancy. They lived here for the next three years (1838 - 1841), by which time the church had been built and was in regular use.

It was when they travelled into Sydney Town that Caroline agonised over the desperate plight of hundreds of girls dumped on the shores of Sydney Harbour and left to wander the town in aimless search of lodgings and employment. She prayed on this intention during the Season of Lent in 1841, offering her own talents to The Lord and seeking a way of serving the young girls. By Easter Sunday she had resolved a plan and with her husband's support their small home at Windsor became the first refuge for homeless migrant girls, sheltering as many as nine girls at a time.

Caroline made regular trips to Sydney to meet the incoming ships at the wharves. The number of migrant girls increased and by 1841, when Captain Chisholm was recalled to India, Caroline left Windsor and moved the girls into a portion of the immigration barracks in Macquarie Street, Sydney.

Over the next few years, she made many trips out into the country with her girls to find them homes and employment in rural communities. Expanding her program, she is believed to have settled more than 11,000 people as farmers, farm hands or domestics.

Caroline managed to undertake all this work even though she was a mother of six young children herself. Today, more than one hundred and fifty years later, Caroline Chisholm is remembered far and wide as 'the Immigrants' Friend', who devoted herself to the welfare of young girls.

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### References:

- '1000 Famous Australians' (Rigby, 1978);
- 'Builders and Crusaders' by T. Luscombe (Lansdowne, 1967);
- '100 Great Australians' by R. Macklin (Currey O'Neill Ross, 1983) and
- '50 Famous Australians' by Prof. G. Portus (Cologravure).

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## Philip Tully (C.1768 - ?)

Philip and his brother, John were sentenced in 1794 for their part in an earlier Irish rebellion and Philip was assigned to Captain Hogan to work on his Cornwallis estate. Pardoned in 1803, he and John Riley shared 40 acres rent free for life, while other tenants were paying thirty shillings per acre per year. The 1809 floods washed away much of Tully's house and the box of deeds to 90 acres and a large house at Brickfields - probably acquired from Johnson for his help in deposing Bligh.

In 1811, a deceased brother, John left Tully a legacy, with which he purchased an additional 100 acres. Floods saw him in strife with creditors. His household included a lively Catholic lady, Mary Dignum (c. 1758-?), well-known by the Windsor magistrates. Mary had accused Pat Partland of stealing her clothes, and had been fined for contempt of court in 1813. Philip was charged for assault and for employing a prisoner without a pass. They were both then charged for not having a number board on their cart. (This same cart was robbed of its tea and calico when coming from Sydney, and Philip had been severely beaten up.)

Still in debt in 1818, Tully's assets gradually evaporated, so that only his small holding at Cornwallis remained. He and Mary adopted the orphaned son of Patrick Hand. In later years, when Tully and his partner, Riley, were dead, young John Hand succeeded to the rent-free 40 acres until the Privy Council finally dislodged the tenant in 1861.

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## John Yeomans (C.1768 - 1837)

Sent out on the 'Britannia' in 1791, John Yeomans met and married Mary Cassidy at St Philip's (although both were of the Catholic faith). They adopted three children that came out with Mary on the 'Kitty'.

John was granted 65 acres at Sackville in 1808, having proved himself a capable farmer at Corncord. In 1805, John made news by taking only two days to deliver to Sydney twelve bushells of wheat in a little open boat. although many of the farmers in his area were troubled by aborigines, John seemed to have been left in peace, and built up the reputation of a reliable and hard-working man. He was chosen by Marsden during the 1806 flood to act as constable for the area.

Three years later, he gained a spirits licence and ran a small inn which he later sold to Cyrus Doyle when he moved upriver. He and his family moved to Wilberforce, where he subscribed to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence. He continued to prosper and in 1818 took over the selling of meat and

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liquor in the Macdonald Valley. Although John and his wife did not leave the Hawkesbury area, some of the family moved into the Hunter region.

(Information on the above settlers came from several sources, but useful data, particularly on religion and religious practices, came from Bobbie Hardy's book, *'Early Hawkesbury Settlers'*).

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## Laurence May (C. 1772 - 1837)

Laurence May came from Dublin, and was sent out on the 'Queen' in 1791. He was flogged as an Irish Papist who had suppressed evidence in Court on the robbery at Arndell's Parramatta residence. By 1800, he had earned himself a 30 acre grant on Robinson's Lagoon and his farm flourished. In 1804, the coroner found that his wife, Anne, had died from excessive drinking and not by violence. May advertised for a wet-nurse for his baby daughter, Sarah. His son, Laurence, was five.

In 1805, he married Elizabeth Dowling. The first child wandered off to perish in a rain-filled sawpit. The second son, Christopher, born April 1813, was later to cause a sensation by riding a velocipede down George Street, creating a public nuisance and being requested by Lieutenant Bell not to appear in public again.

Storms had demolished part of May's Bardonnarrang farm, and so May put his Parramatta inn up for sale. He held farms at Prospect and Concord, as well as others 'down the river', which were offered on clearing leases.

May had a racing chestnut gelding, 'Tickle Toby', which won him a lot of money, and also caused him in 1813 to ask debtors to pay up. In 1815 he opened at Wilberforce the Windsor horse mill, a powerful mechanism for grinding flour, and provided complimentary cartage of grain from wharf to mill. A charge that he substituted inferior grain was found false.

Laurance's third wife, Risetta, had 2 sons: John (1817-1838) and James (1820-1891). In 1819, May had to have his leg amputated, but his toughness and fortitude surprised the doctors. He returned home and continued to build his reputation as a man of vision, becoming a pioneer irrigator along the Hawkesbury River. James carried on farming in the Hawkesbury. He and his wife, Caroline, had 8 children - James Alfred, Herbert, Christopher Watkin, Jack, Joshua and daughters Tess, Sophie and Caroline. James May died on 6th August, 1891, and was buried with step-brother, Christopher, who died childless in 1890, in the Catholic cemetery at Windsor.

James' sons, James Alfred, Christopher and Joshua carried on farming in the Hawkesbury district. James Alfred, Christopher, Joshua and Jack May are all buried in the Catholic cemetery and the Mays living in the district now are descendants of James Alfred, Christopher and Joshua May.

(Information on Laurance May was provided by E. Harding)

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## Mrs Nora Cupitt (1890 - 1990)

Mrs Honora Cupitt died on June 17, 1990, 18 days before reaching her centenary. Nora was well-known in the district, living at Freemans Reach for much of her younger days, and then in Windsor. She taught as many as three generations of several families, beginning her career at the age of 17 at Miss Robinson's school at Wilberforce. A sign of her commitment was the daily walk to school, a distance of 12 kilometres.

Nora joined a variety of community groups, including the Red Cross (founding the Windsor branch), the Hawkesbury District Hospital Society and the Windsor Ladies Bowling Club. She also travelled around the world several times.

A staunch Catholic, she was married in 1929 to Frederick William Cupitt, but was widowed soon after. She did not remarry, but continued to live in her George Street home, caring for herself until well into her 90s.

In the 1970s she was awarded a MBE for service to the community and to education. Mrs Cupitt had taught a record 53 years, but after retiring from teaching in State schools in the 1960s, she could not stay away, and taught at St Matthew's School from 1966 for several years. Nora had the ability to remember the faces of her former pupils long after they left her classroom, and her alert mind and wit resulted in the presentation of an encouragement sash in a local show girl quest (at the age of 95) and a nomination as citizen of the year in 1989.

Mrs Cupitt was the sole surviving member of one of the original Macquarie town families, the McMahan's, who settled here 100 years ago.

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## The Eather Family

The three Eather brothers, George, Thomas and William, were farming at Cornwallis when the all-time record flood devastated the Hawkesbury area. The only areas in Windsor not submerged were along the Terrace between New and Fairfield Streets and George Street, from Johnston to Bridge Streets. The refugees sheltered at 'Fairfield', St Matthew's Anglican and Catholic Churches, the School of Arts and the Court House.

It was in this flood of June, 1867 that the Eather family suffered appalling losses. Thomas and William both lost their wives, Emma and her five children and Catherine Eather and her five children, swept away before the rescue boat could reach them. They had been awaiting rescue on the rooftop of one of the houses, built on wooden piers on the flats of Cornwallis, when the swirling waters caused the house to collapse.

A boat had been launched, with a crew of three - James Ross, Jack Jarvis and a Swede. Mr Dight, who lived across the river, lit fires at his house to guide the boat, as it was pitch dark at the time. (It was Mr Dight who offered fifty pounds for a

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crew to attempt the rescue). The crew rowed across dangerously swirling water for three hours before finding the survivors.

The three Eather brothers and one young son had managed to reach a nearby tree. William had been strapped to the willow, all but dead, and he resuscitated with great difficulty.

The Parish Burial Register shows the burial of four children on 26 June, 1867. Apparently the other eight bodies were not recovered. Parish priest, Father Hallinan, shared in the grief and hardships suffered by the people along the Hawkesbury.

*St Mathew's*