

Maetzig-History
From John Maetzig
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On completion of this watchmaking apprenticeship, at Weisensee, circa 1905, my Grandfather Ernest and your Grandfather Robert, embarked on a working holiday to the United Kingdom. It's not known what he did while he was in the UK but we do know that he lived and worked for a while in Colwyn Bay, North Wales.

We don't know what prompted him to travel to New Zealand. One story was that a friend won some money in a lottery and they jointly decided to travel to the 'the furthest place they could go' - and chose New Zealand.

Another story is that he and some friends saw a poster on the wall of a railway station in North Wales that encouraged young men to sail to the country and take up farming. The poster apparently promised cheap or even free land. The latter seems to be the more logical reason.

Whatever the motivation, Ernest boarded the vessel Corinthic in Southampton, England in September 1908.

He arrived in Wellington, New Zealand on 4th November 1908.

It seems that he did not remain in Wellington for long. We understand that he soon discovered that the poster was well out of date and in fact New Zealand was no longer a country offering cheap farmland.

We believe that he simply decided to continue his working holiday travels in New Zealand. Nothing is known of exactly where he went. The next we hear of Ernest is in Westport in the South Island where from mid-1909 he began work as a watchmaker.

Ernest remained in Westport for more than two years.

It is obvious he quickly came to love New Zealand, to the extent that in August 1911 he applied to become a New Zealand citizen.

His intention was to go into business on his own account, and saved hard with that aim in mind. In 1912 this dream began to be realised.

He became aware of a watchmakers business for sale in the coastal Taranaki town of Opunake, and he promptly sailed to Wellington then caught a train to Opunake.

He arrived just prior to noon and decided to have lunch before visiting the business concerned. However when he did arrive in the early afternoon, he was disappointed to be told that the business had sold just one and a half hours earlier.

However, the owner advised of another watchmakers business for sale in Taranaki - this time in Inglewood.

Ernest promptly caught a train to Inglewood and entered negotiations with the owner.

This time he was successful, and thus began a Maetzig business relationship with Inglewood that was to last 80 years.

My grandmother, Emma Maud Lloyd-Jones was born at Blenheim (New Zealand), on 22nd Feb 1891.

She was the daughter Sarah-Jane (nee Trimmer) and Edwin Lloyd-Jones. She was the sixth born of seven children.

Little is known about her childhood, although it is known that for a period she lived in Wellington. I remember her telling me of childhood days spent walking from their home in the suburb of Brooklyn to Oriental Bay for a swim in the ocean.

Emma's father was variously a hotellier, cordial manufacturer, restaurant keeper, machinist, and sewing machine salesperson.

We understand he was on a trip to New Plymouth in 1902 when, apparently heavily intoxicated, he fell asleep on a railway line and was run over by a train and killed. Emma would have been aged 10 or 11 at this time.

Emma's mother and her children may have been living in Wellington at the time of the death. We understand that they then moved to Wanganui and then on to Taranaki.

While in later years Emma did not like to talk about her father, she was close to the remainder of her family. This family was not without considerable tragedy - one brother, Henry, was killed at Gallipoli during World War 1, while another brother, Albert, suffered mustard gas poisoning while serving in France during the same war.

On completing her education, Emma trained as a dressmaker, a skill that remained with her for the rest of her life.

It is not known exactly how she came to meet Ernest. We believe that the meeting came via her sister Cissie who was married to a friend of Ernest.

An interesting point is that when Ernest Maetzig and Emma Lloyd-Jones married, he was aged 37 and she 30.

INGLEWOOD

In 1912, when 29-year-old Ernest Maetzig arrived in Inglewood to begin business life, it was a small growing town. Thick rain forest had recently been cleared and new farms were being established.

Ernest was a highly skilled watchmaker who had trained in Germany, so it was not long before he gained a strong reputation for the quality of his workmanship.

In fact during the course of his business career in Inglewood he trained no less than eight apprentices, including two of his sons Ernest and Noel.

Each apprenticeship lasted 6 years, which means he was continually involved in training young men in their craft for at least 39 years.

My Grandfather had been in business for just two years when his life was completely turned upside down by the outbreak of the World War 1.

Being part of the British Empire meant that New Zealand was at war with Germany, and as a result Ernest found himself declared an enemy alien.

At that time there was much ill-feeling against any person of German nationality. Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities Ernest was officially advised that he must close his business and was interned (imprisoned) on Sommes Island (which is in Wellington's harbour)

We can only guess at the pain that he must have been feeling at this time.

Removed from his adopted home in Inglewood, forced to close down a fledgling business, and now imprisoned, he must have suffered incredible feelings of loneliness and frustration. The fact that his own family members (including his beloved brother Robert) were fighting his adopted countrymen on the other side of the world would have made this time in his life extremely tough.

But we know that he did not spend very long in prison. Official records show he was soon gainfully employed as a watchmaker in Wellington. He was also engaged by the NZ Meteorological Service to repair their weather recording instruments.

It was during this time that he became proficient in optics, and in later years he practiced as an optician from his Inglewood business premises.

After the war, Ernest returned to Inglewood to resume life and pick up the pieces of his business. It was at this time met his future wife Emma. The couple were married in Hawera in 1920 and purchased a house on Cutfield St in the centre of Inglewood.

Ernest and Emma Maetzig remained in this house for the rest of their lives.

One of the wedding presents the couple received came from your Grandfather Robert. It is an oil painting of Wartburg Castle, which is still in the family. (My brother Robert has it hanging in his house).

Apart from business, Ernest Maetzig involved himself in a wide range of community activities. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge, a successful bowler, golfer, and keen trout fisherman.

In 1st Aug 1923 Ernest and Emma Maetzig had their first child, a son who was appropriately named Ernest Lloyd Maetzig. (my father)

Two years later they had another son, Henry, named after Emma's older brother who was killed at Gallipoli during the WW1. This second son was born intellectually retarded and spent most of his short life in an institution in Nelson, and died at the age of 13.

A third son, Noel Albert, was born on 15th December 1926 - the proximity of his birth to Christmas the reason behind his christian name.

In 1930 Ernest returned to Germany on a three-week trip to visit his family, particularly his parents who by then were becoming very old. You have shared some photos of this very happy trip.

Shortly after his return to New Zealand, a fourth son was born. Eric George Maetzig was born on 13th March 1933, his christian name an anglicised version of Ernest's brother Erich whom he had just visited.

Family life was happy and orderly. The sons enjoyed a normal small-town upbringing, attending Inglewood Primary School and then travelling by train to Stratford for their secondary schooling. In 1939 my Grandfather took my father into the family business as an apprentice watchmaker.

But a short time later, family and business life was again severely disrupted by the outbreak of World War 2.

By this time Ernest senior was a naturalised New Zealander so was exempted from enemy alien status, but my father was conscripted into the army. During the war he saw service in Egypt, Italy and Japan.

Once again this period must have been hugely painful for my grandfather.

Not only was his eldest son fighting for the Allied forces overseas, but conceivably against his very own cousins.

After the war my father spent a year as part of the occupation force in Japan at a location not far from Hiroshima. I believe that this was the cause of his early death from cancer at the age of 59.

When he returned from Japan in 1946 he resumed his watchmaking apprenticeship. Noel also completed an apprenticeship under his father, while Eric entered the local government field.

My grandfather continued as a watchmaker until his death in late 1952, at which point my father Ernest and his brother Noel continued in partnership.

Emma Maetzig remained in the family residence in Cutfield St. Inglewood until her death in 1973.

No member of any generation of the Maetzig family now lives in Inglewood, the town central to the establishment of the Maetzig family in New Zealand.

There are now 50 direct descendants of Ernest in New Zealand. They are scattered throughout the country.

NATURALISATION as a New Zealand citizen

My Grandfather tried for more than 10 years to become an official New Zealander - but his efforts were thwarted by a combination of bureaucracy and world conflict.

His first attempt to become a naturalised New Zealander was on 19th September 1911 when he was still working as a watchmaker in Westport. His application took a full year to be considered by the Government, only to be declined.

The official letter stated *"I have the honour...to inform you that five years residence is necessary before naturalization is granted..."*, reminding him that he had resided for only four years in New Zealand at that point.

The next known correspondence on the matter dates 5th August 1914, when Ernest re-applied for naturalisation. But he was declined again, this time due to World War 1.

"I am directed by the Minister of Internal Affairs to inform you that it is regretted that no letters of naturalisation will be issued while a state of war exists,"

Nothing more seems to have happened on the matter until 7th November 1922, by which time Ernest was married.

A well known Lawyer from Inglewood wrote to the Government re-applying for naturalisation on Ernest's behalf.

"The applicant has for many years been an honest and straightforward citizen of this town. I shall be pleased if you will kindly give this matter your consideration and advise me in due course if letters of naturalisation can now be granted."

But still he was declined.

The letter stated *"I have to inform you that naturalisation is not being granted to natives of Germany unless such persons or their immediate relatives have served abroad with the British forces in the recent war. If Mr Maetzig is in a position to comply with that condition, I shall be glad to be advised of the particulars."*

Clearly Ernest could not comply with this requirement.

But it did offer an opening, adding that relatives of Emma Maetzig could be taken into consideration in this regard.

This prompted the lawyer to immediately write back. *"Mrs Maetzig had three brothers on service in the late war - one of whom was killed, the other gassed,"* he wrote.

The matter was then referred to the Magistrate's Court in New Plymouth (the nearest city to Inglewood).

A statement of evidence to the court backgrounded Ernest Maetzig's years in New Zealand, including pointing out that he had married a young lady of British parentage whose brothers served in the war.

But... *"I am informed that numbers of Inglewood residents whose sons were at the front expressed some fairly strong sentiments during the war against this applicant, due no doubt to the fact of applicants nationality."*

But the report added that other reports received disclosed that fact that Ernest Maetzig was a *"sober, law-abiding and reliable member of the community, of good character, skilled at his trade, and in good circumstances."*

But anti-German feeling was obviously still evident in a report by the Stipendiary Magistrate.. *"It does not appear to me that the applicant is entitled to have his application granted merely because he has had the luck to marry some young lady of English birth and whose brothers and other relatives served in the late war. It is not desirable, in my opinion, that he should 'float into nationality' in this way."*

But the senior Magistrate ignored this report and conceded that it was evident from file records that Ernest Maetzig intended as far back as 1911 to settle in New Zealand...

"That being so, it appears to me that it is a case where the applicant should be recommended," he said.

Official notification was received on December 22 1922 that Ernest Maetzig had duly been naturalised as a New Zealander - a perfect Christmas present after 12 years of effort.