

# 9. THE AYERS FAMILY TREE

Chart No 1

**William Aires**  
 B:  
 M: 24 Jul 1748  
 D: 11 Jan 1753  
 Juliana Harris  
 B: 16 May 1725  
 Wymington  
 M: 24 Jul 1748  
 D:

**Thomas Ayers**  
 B: 19 Feb 1748  
 M:  
 D:

**Mary Ayers**  
 B: 10 Feb 1750  
 M:  
 D:

**William Ayres**  
 B: 16 Feb 1752  
 Wymington  
 M: 14 Oct 1776  
 D: 9 Mar 1829  
 Mary Denson  
 B:  
 M: 14 Oct 1776  
 D: 16 Jan 1834

**Richard Ayres**  
 B: 18 May 1777  
 Stagsden  
 M:  
 D: 13 Oct 1840  
 Rebecca Eaton  
 B: 4 May 1777  
 Turvey  
 M:  
 D: 3 Mar 1838

**Thomas Ayres**  
 B: 2 Nov 1817  
 M: 10 Aug 1841  
 D: 18 Jul 1886  
 Elizabeth Gibbs  
 B: Nov 1818  
 M: 10 Aug 1841  
 D: 23 Jul 1900

**James Ayers**  
 B: 3 Nov 1799  
 Turvey  
 M:  
 D:  
 Esther Stanton  
 B: 11 Oct 1801  
 M:  
 D:

**Samuel Ayres**  
 B: 1802  
 M:  
 D:

**Joel Ayres**  
 B: 1805  
 M:  
 D:

**Elizabeth Ayres**  
 B: 1828  
 M:  
 D:

2

3

# Ayers Family Tree

Chart No 2  
Continued from: 1

**Thomas Ayres**  
B: 2 Nov 1817

M: 10 Aug 1841  
D: 18 Jul 1886  
Elizabeth Gibbs  
B: Nov 1818

M: 10 Aug 1841  
D: 23 Jul 1900

**Eliza Ayres**  
B: Mar 1842

M:  
D: 14 Jul 1842

**Samuel Ayres**  
B: Jun 1844

M:  
D: 13 Aug 1845

**Samuel Ayers**  
B: 13 Sep 1846  
Turvey

M: 16 Jun 1875  
D: 24 Feb 1939  
Sarah Ann Judson  
B: 8 Feb 1857

M: 16 Jun 1875  
D: 2 Jun 1947

**Rose Emily Ayers**  
B: 6 Oct 1877

M: 26 Oct 1905  
D: 12 Jul 1965  
Henry Robert (Harry) Taylor  
B: 20 Aug 1879

M: 26 Oct 1905  
D: 7 Jul 1965

**Ivan Henry Taylor**  
B: 20 May 1907

M:  
D: 1925

**Vivienne Emily Taylor**  
B: 14 Apr 1908

M:  
D:  
Robert Henry Ellis  
B: 1 Dec 1905

M:  
D: 3 Jan 1978

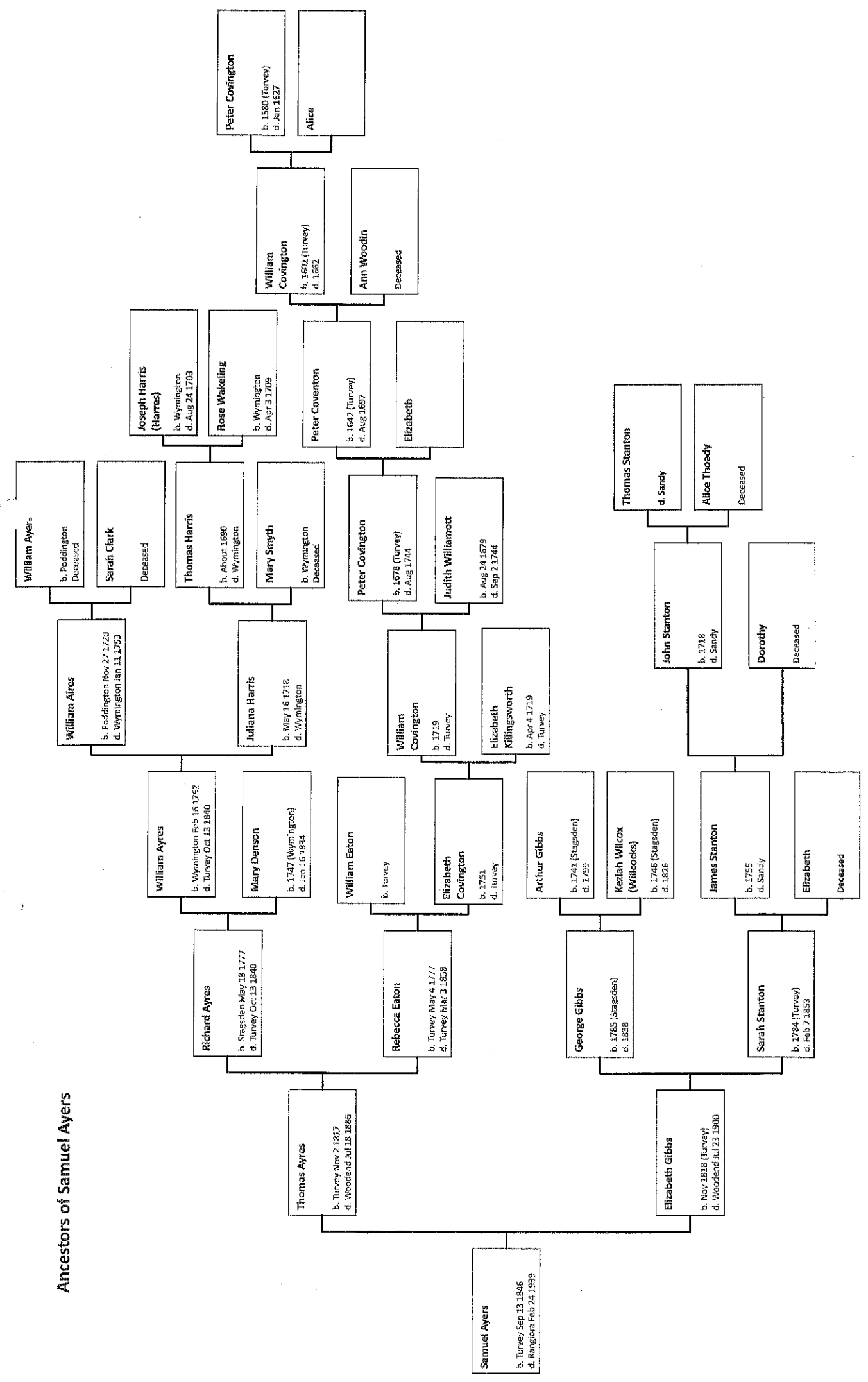
**Nova Olwyn Taylor**  
B: 26 Oct 1910

M: 22 May 1940  
D: 7 Mar 1981  
Alex Ronald Ayers  
B: 13 May 1914

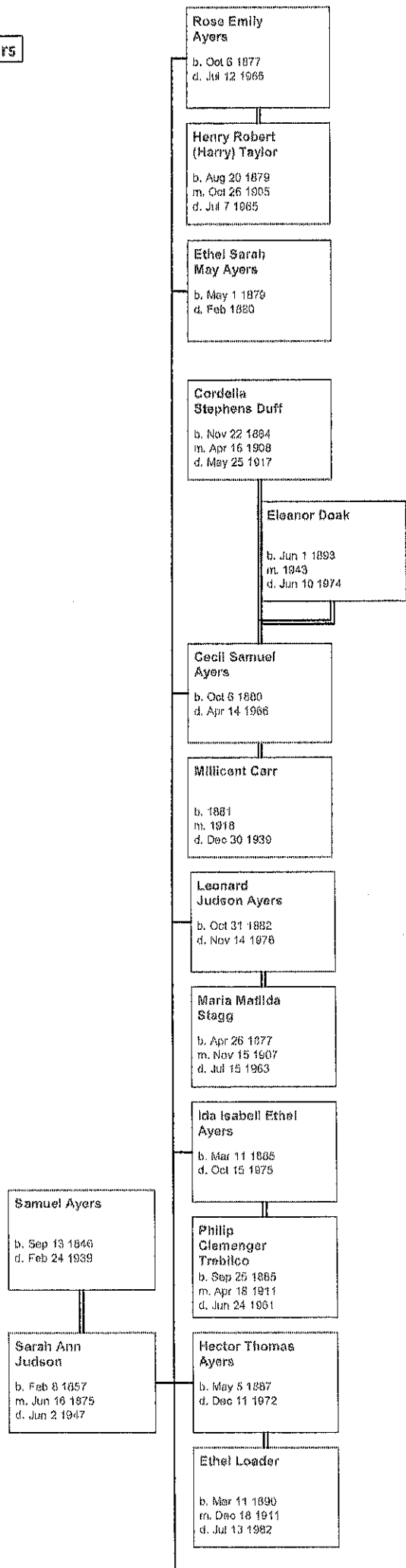
M: 22 May 1940  
D:

4  
5

# Ancestors of Samuel Ayers



**Descendants of Samuel Ayers**



Rose Emily Ayers  
b. Oct 6 1877  
d. Jul 12 1965

Henry Robert  
(Harry) Taylor  
b. Aug 20 1879  
m. Oct 26 1905  
d. Jul 7 1965

Vivienne Emily  
Taylor  
b. Apr 14 1908  
d. Apr 14 2002

Robert Henry Ellis  
b. Dec 1 1905  
m. Feb 24 1982  
d. Jan 3 1978

Wendy Vivienne  
Ellis  
b. Sep 5 1936

Ernest Arthur  
Crane  
m. Dec 18 1966  
d. Jul 6 1996  
ol. 1980

Murray Judson  
Ellis  
b. Jan 4 1943

Catherine Izabel  
Ratcliffe  
b. Jun 10 1947  
m. Jan 22 1968  
d. Mar 5 1998

Norman Henry  
Nicholls  
b. Aug 8 1964  
d. Aug 9 1964

Colin Malcolm  
Nicholls  
b. Aug 10 1965

Lisa Slater  
m. Feb 5 1995

Walter Robert  
Nicholls  
b. Jan 12 1969

Rebecca Winifred  
Murray  
b. Dec 4 1970  
m. Aug 28 1995

Silvia Ellen Crane  
b. Jun 14 1968

Christopher  
James Purdie  
b. Dec 17 1966  
m. Mar 4 1995

Natalie Wendy  
Crane  
b. Jan 22 1972

Benjamin Felix  
Zwartz  
b. Jun 3 1971  
m. Nov 17 2001

Richard Murray  
Ellis  
b. Aug 24 1971

Christine Anne  
Vaughan  
b. Aug 1 1971

Megan Jean Ellis  
b. Jun 4 1974

Merewyn Jane  
Ellis  
b. Jan 16 1980

Jessica Emily  
Coppell  
b. Mar 27 1992

Ryan George  
Nicholls  
b. Jun 12 1999

Zoe Rebecca  
Nicholls  
b. Jun 21 2001

Daniel Ernest  
Purdie  
b. Jul 23 1997

Aaron Keith  
Purdie  
b. Dec 30 1999

Benjamin Ian  
Purdie  
b. Nov 17 2001

Zoe Rose Crane  
b. Jan 20 2003

Sasha Helen  
Crane  
b. Feb 27 2005

## 1. EARLY HISTORY OF THE AYERS FAMILY

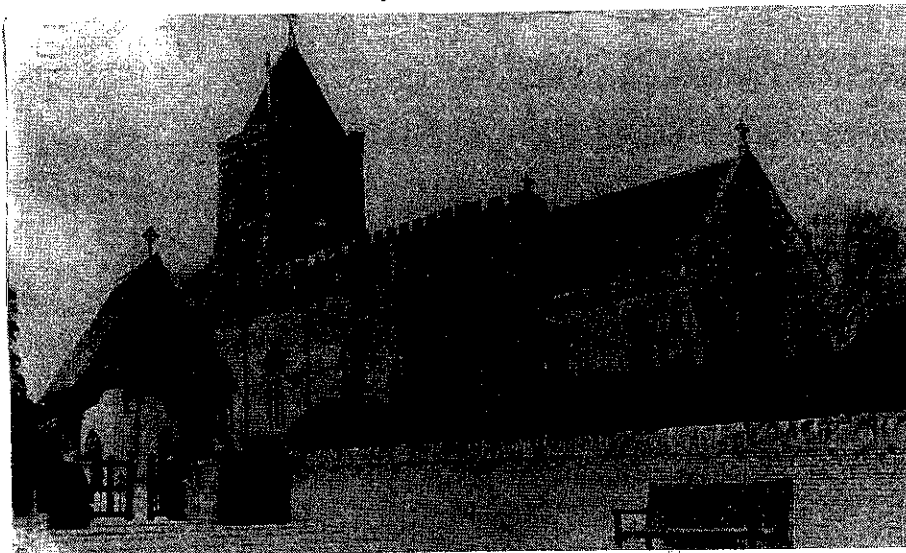
The history of the Ayers family, as far back as can be ascertained, begins in Bedfordshire England about the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first recorded entry is a marriage of WILLIAM AIRES (labourer) to JULIANA HARRIS at Wymington Bedfordshire on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1748. He was also buried there on 11 January 1753.

They had three children: Thomas, Mary (named after Juliana's parents) and WILLIAM - baptised at Wymington on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 1752. The name is recorded as AIRS at the baptism but when WILLIAM married MARY DENSON on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1776 his name was spelt AYRES. The spelling of names in those times depended on how the Rector or recorder felt it was spelt, as very few of the ordinary folk were literate.

### The Church of St Lawrence at Wymington



WILLIAM and MARY as far as is known had four children - RICHARD, Ann, Sybilla and Thomas. Their surnames at baptism were spelt Eyres, Ayers, Airs and Ayr. (A literal interpretation of the name gives the meaning as "son of the heir", but it was a common surname in England at the time, so little importance can be attached to this). William (junior) lived to what in those days was a great age, dying on March 9 1829 aged 76 years. He was buried at what was by then his home village - Turvey.



**All Saints Church at Turvey**

RICHARD married REBECCA EATON daughter of William and Elizabeth Eaton of Turvey. It is not as yet known where they were wed, but they eventually settled in Turvey where the family stayed until emigrating to New Zealand. He was a mason by trade. His son THOMAS was baptised in the Turvey Parish Church in 1817, and came to follow his father's line of work. Another son JAMES was also a mason by trade and appears to have lived in Turvey until his death sometime after 1842. There is also record of the death in 1832 of Elizabeth Ayres aged 11 years, daughter of Richard and Rebecca Ayres. In all Richard and Rebecca had eight children. Rebecca died in 1838 aged 62 years and Richard died at Turvey in 1840.

## **THE VILLAGE OF TURVEY**

The name Turvey comes from 'Turf-field'. Turvey is situated in north-west Bedfordshire ("the Stone Country"). Brick making and stone masonry are long standing economic activities in the area which contains many fine old churches. It was an area of few gentry but had a large number of yeoman farmers with comparatively small holdings. The whole area was one in which grinding poverty was apparently a commonplace. Thus in an 18th century Bedfordshire village 27 could die of smallpox in 52 years and only 38 die of old age. In the village of Turvey itself in 1671 the assessors of Hearth Tax noted there were 107 dwellings in the village of which 53 could pay the tax and 54 were discharged. This meant that these latter dwellings did not have a fire. Most of the villages in the area did not have a pub because the men were too poor to drink.

### 3. THOMAS and ELIZABETH AYERS *and family*

In records from the 1841 census of England there is a discrepancy between the date of birth of Thomas and the age as given in the census, but at that time it was sufficient to give the approximate age, e.g. 20-25. It appears that Thomas did this, while Elizabeth gave her correct age.

#### TURVEY CENSUS 1841 (additional information from other sources has been added in parentheses)

NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	NAME	AGE
Thomas Ayers	20	Bricklayer	Mary Ayers	15 (m. John Wooding 19.9.1843)
James Ayers	40	Mason	Elizabeth Ayers	15 (m. John Weed 11.7.1843)
Ester Ayers	40		Joel Ayers	12 (m. Anne Edmons 29.1.1850)
Rachel Markham	40	Lacemaker	Sarah Ayers	9 (m. William Garlick 22.3.1850)
Elizabeth Gibbs	22	Lacemaker	Ann Ayers	3 (m. William Sinfield 25.12.1859)
William Ayers	6		(Jane Ayers)	(Born 1842, m. James Howe 1864)
Teresa Ayers	20	(married John 23.5.1850)		

Not long after the taking of the census, Thomas Ayres and Elizabeth Gibbs were married in the Turvey Church on 10 August 1841. Richard Ayres, (a mason) and George Gibbs (a shepherd) were named as fathers. A daughter Eliza was born in 1842, and a son Samuel in 1844, but both died in their infancy. Another son, also named SAMUEL was born on 13 Sept. 1846. In the census of 1851 held on 30 March, the following people are listed:

#### TURVEY CENSUS 1851

##### 98 CARLTON STREET

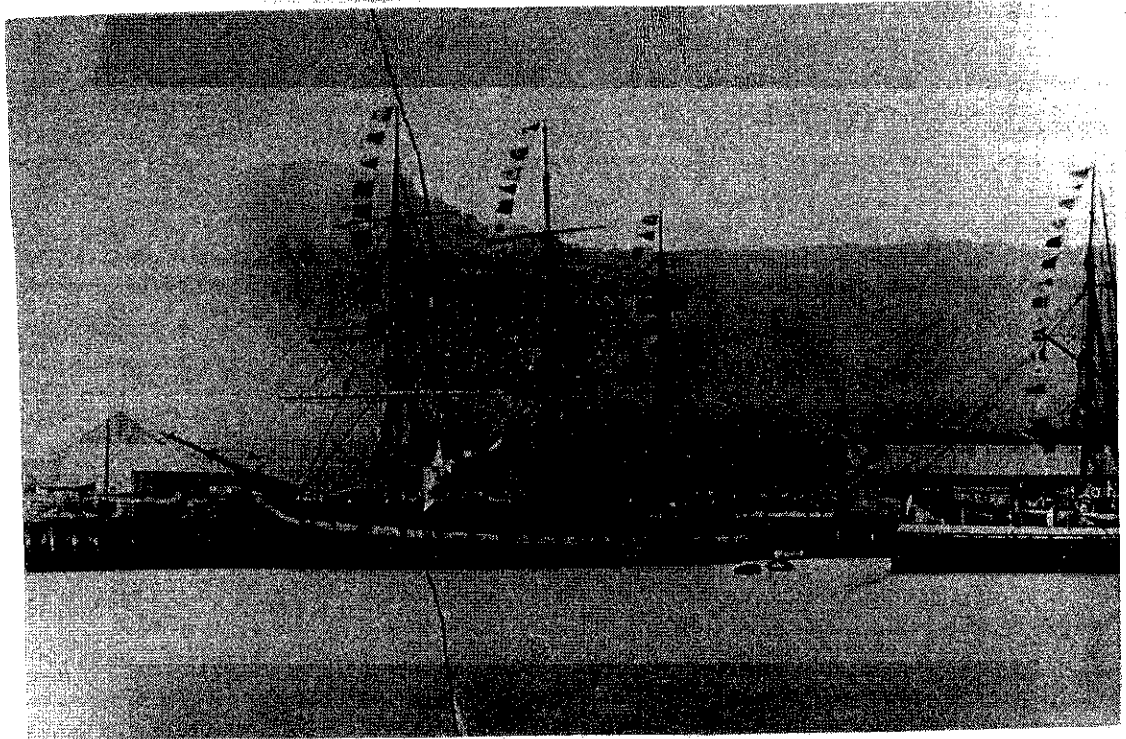
NAME		AGE	BORN	OCCUPATION
Thomas Ayers	Head	33	Turvey	Bricklayer
Elizabeth Ayers	Wife	32	Turvey	
Samuel Ayers	Son	4	Turvey	
Sarah Ayers	Daughter	0	Turvey	
Rachel Markham	Lodger	56	Huntingdon	Lacemaker
Sarah Gibbs	Lodger	66	Turvey	(married Stokes)
Elizabeth Gibbs	Visitor	13	Turvey	
Susanna Gibbs	Visitor	11	Turvey	

##### 88 CARLTON STREET

NAME		AGE	BORN	OCCUPATION
James Ayers	Head	50	Turvey	Stone Mason
Ester Ayers	Wife	49	Turvey	Lacemaker
William Ayers	Son	15	Turvey	Stone Mason
Ann Ayers	Daughter	12	Turvey	Lacemaker
Jane Ayers	Daughter	9	Turvey	Lacemaker
James Gibbs	Visitor	31	Turvey	Agricultural Labourer
Ester Gibbs	Visitor	9	Balcombe, Sussex	Scholar



*ZEALANDIA*. 1st Voyage dep. London 11 June 1858.  
Arrived Canterbury 21 September 1858.



400 Immigrants came on the *Zealandia* taking 98 days.

Thomas Ayers and his family emigrated to New Zealand in 1858. Just why the Ayers family decided to come to New Zealand is not certain, but several families from the Turvey district emigrated at the same time. They were helped by Squire Higgens who was a great benefactor in many ways to the whole village. Social conditions in mid-nineteenth century were grim for working people, and no doubt these humble folk dreamed of a better life for themselves and their children in far-off New Zealand. Even though conditions for the first arrivals were harsh and severe, these hardy pioneers felt they were better off in this more democratic social climate.

A further reason why the Ayers family may have decided to come to New Zealand was that Elizabeth Ayers had two brothers - James and George Gibbs, and other relatives, already living in New Zealand and settled at Woodend in North Canterbury.

The family came to New Zealand on the first voyage of the ship *Zealandia* in 1858. They had a trip of about three months, and conditions of the sailing ships in those days were far from comfortable.

The shipping list gives the family as:

Thomas	41	( <i>Bricklayer</i> )
Elizabeth	39	
Samuel	12	
Sarah	7	
Thomas	3	
Rebecca	Infant	
Rachel Markham		

The "Zealandia" was the ship that the Ayers family came on to NZ in 1858. That must have been its first trip. I have read about a family whose ancestors came out on that ship's third trip, from Gravesend on 8 September 1871.

'The Zealandia was described as a beautiful ship specially designed for carrying passengers of which on our voyage she had 46 paying passengers and 160 govt. assisted passengers on board. Her saloon was spacious and lofty and her cabins were unusually large and well ventilated, having extra large portholes to them. She had some special cabins for families and a ladies saloon. The second cabin was on deck and the berths were larger than usual and well lighted....

On the homeward trip to England, when she left in late February 1872, she had her cabins cleared out for 4,000 bales of wool....and sadly Captain White was washed overboard and drowned....

The Zealandia had an eventful career, at one time being in collision with another ship in mid-ocean. In 1877, under the command of Capt.Sellars, she collided with the Ellen Lamb, about a month out from Wellington on her home voyage. The Zealandia should have given way, cut the Ellen Lamb almost in two and within three minutes of the collision, the Ellen May with her 8 men aboard went down. The weather was calm, thus enabling the men of the Zealandia to lower the life boats and rescue 7. They were able to make sufficient repairs to get the Zealandia to Rio de Janiero where it took 6 weeks to make her seaworthy again. On another occasion they encountered terrific gales in the Southern Ocean.

After completing 31 voyages to New Zealand was sold to the Russians. She was stranded in 1911'

#### Free and Assisted Emigration to New Zealand

Free and Assisted Passages are granted by the Government of New Zealand as under:  
To Married Agricultural labourers, Navvies, Ploughmen, Shepherds, and a few Country Mechanics, on their giving a Promisory Note for 10 pounds, payable in the Colony by installment, or by paying 5 pounds in cash.

Free passages are given to single female domestic servants.

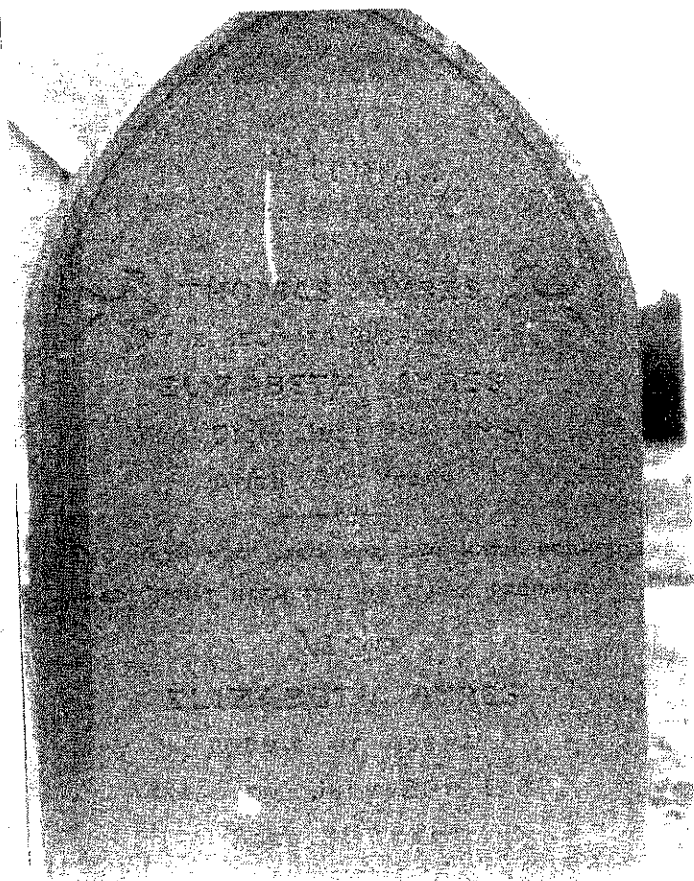
Daughters and Sons of 12yrs of age and upwards, and going out with their parents, are taken, the former free of charge and the latter on payment of 4 pounds in cash or on giving a Promisory Note for 6 pounds.

Single men are taken on payment (before sailing) of the sum of 8 pounds, or on payment of 4 pounds in cash and giving a Promisory Note for 8 pounds.

For terms and conditions apply personally, or by letter, to the Agent General for NZ, 7 Westminster Chambers, London, S.W.Gallway – James J Flynn, Victoria Square.



Keziah, Elizabeth (mother), Rebecca. First home of Thomas Ayers in Woodend.



Gravestone of Thomas and Elizabeth Ayers at Woodend.

At some stage before his arrival in New Zealand, Thomas Ayers had become a Methodist and the family appeared to have immediately moved to Woodend which was a strong centre of Methodism in North Canterbury.

There they became well known figures, rating a mention in D.N. Hawkins "Beyond the Waimakariri" and his "History of Rangiora".

Thomas Ayers was a founder of the Woodend Wesleyan Methodist Church. After they arrived the family walked to church meetings in Kaiapoi. The settlers soon had James Gibbs' sod house recognised as a preaching place, and the first service was held in the summer of 1858-59. There is reference in a book by Rev. W.A. Chambers of the "singing led by young Samuel's true tenor voice cultivated as a choir boy in Turvey Church".

In 1860 a building was erected to serve as a school, Sunday School and Church, and Thomas Ayers gave the section. As this was found to be unsuitable as a church, in 1864 a church was opened, and Thomas Ayers was one of the first Trustees.

Turvey was known as a "Village of Golden Stone" and much building had been completed just prior to the family leaving on 11 June 1858. The latest skills and building techniques were well known to Thomas and these were used in the area of North Canterbury around Woodend (Gibbstown) where they settled. The two boys of the family Samuel and Thomas (nine years younger) were both instructed by their father and became master craftsmen mainly in brick, but the mason's art was kept alive in the use of Oamaru stone.

Large homesteads such as "Spie" near the Omihi saddle and "Balmoral" had chimneys built by Thomas and the Ohoka homestead was built by "Thomas Ayers and sons". It is understood that the Ohoka homestead took nine years to build. Several shops and houses in Rangiora have the characteristic brickwork of Thomas Ayers. They walked all over North Canterbury before they had a horse.

Thomas (senior) purchased land in 1861 on the north side of the Rangiora-Woodend road. Land purchase was denied to all except the very rich in England and this fact was in a large measure the motivation to emigrate. In 1867 more land was purchased, this time in Judsons lane. In the same year Samuel bought land also at Woodend and again in 1872 and 1876. In 1880 and 1885 Samuel and Thomas his brother purchased land in partnership on the main north road between where the Anglican church and the Anglican hall now stand. Samuel's interest was continued in this area until 1929.

Thomas died in July of 1886, of heart failure, Elizabeth in July of 1900 of 'senile decay'. Both lie buried in the same grave in the cemetery at Woodend.

## 4. SAMUEL AND SARAH ANN AYERS

In 1875 SAMUEL married SARAH ANN the daughter of William and Sarah Judson, who were farmers at Woodend. Sarah Ann was born on 8 February 1857 at Eastwell in Nottinghamshire, and at the age of three came to New Zealand on the sailing ship *Clontarf* which left London on 21 November 1859 and arrived at Lyttleton on 11 March 1860. The voyage took four months and the *Clontarf* was a very old ship, and was lost on the return voyage. Very ill and saved from being thrown overboard by the captain of the *Clontarf* by her mother's assurance that she was still alive, Sarah Ann was the fourth child of William and Sarah Judson. Twenty-eight children and five adults dying of sickness on the four month voyage from England, arriving at Lyttelton 16 March 1860 made the voyage one of the worst on record. Among those 28 children was Sarah Ann's younger sister Martha. At three years of age, Sarah Ann was the youngest child to survive the voyage. The names of Sarah Ann's family were:

<b>William Henry (Father)</b>	-	<b>Elizabeth (Mother (nee George))</b>
<b>James</b>		<b>Martha Maria }</b>
<b>Elizabeth</b>		<b>Eliza }</b>
<b>Sybil</b>		<b>George } (Born in NZ)</b>
<b>Sarah Ann</b>		<b>William Henry }</b>
<b>Martha (died on board)</b>		<b>Issac }</b>

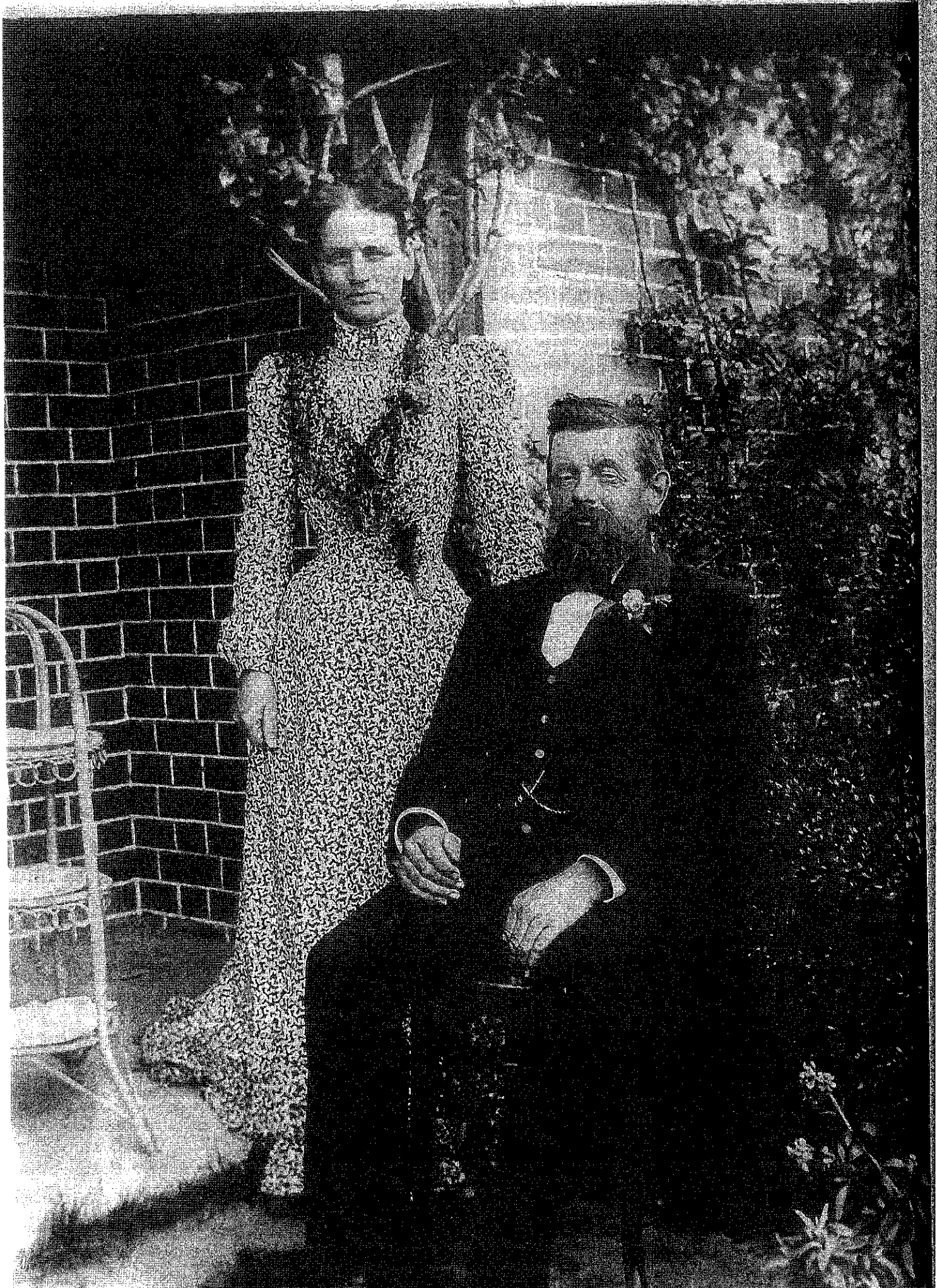
The family first stayed with William's brother, Mark and his wife Ann who had arrived two years earlier. William built a sod house close to Mark's house and later replaced it with a wooden house named "*Waihiwi*", which still stands today, although considerably altered and enlarged. William and Mark Judson had one sister Anne, who stayed in England, and one brother Matthew, who came with William as far as Australia, and decided to stay but shortly after went to America, and has not been heard of since.

Not much is known of Sarah Ann's childhood. Her schooling and life within the family at Woodend shaped her character and abilities, which blossomed in later life. Her lack of robustness in early life, supposedly an aftermath of the voyage illness, made it necessary for her to leave home and convalesce near Lyttelton where fresh sea air was available. Outwardly not impaired, she lived the rest of her life with one lung, and always delighted in seeing the puzzlement of doctors when they would examine her and inform her of this fact.

The girls of the family had to work and milk the cows and feed the pigs before and after school. The milk run was mainly a swamp, and Sarah Ann talked of having to jump from niggerhead to niggerhead when bringing the cows in for milking, saying that if she had slipped she would have drowned in the mud and water.

The marrying off of the girls was quite an easy business in those days. Girls were scarce, and competition for them was keen. Sarah Ann said that her disappointed suitors took comfort in the fact that Samuel Ayers didn't look very strong and would not live very long, but she made such a good husband of him that he lived to 93!





Sarah Ann and Samuel

Sarah Ann and Samuel were married 16 June 1875 at her father's house in Woodend and settled in Rangiora, where in 1873 Samuel bought land in North Street (King Street). Samuel started to build a house on a section he had bought. When they moved in, the house was habitable but not completed, and it had various additions and alterations in the following years, no doubt to accommodate the increasing family. There were only about four other houses in King Street about this time. Prissy recalls seeing houses exactly like "Ayerholme" when she went to Turvey in 1951. The house was originally called "Turvey House" and Sarah Ann used to say "It may be topsy-turvy but there's no need to tell everyone". (It has now been returned to its original name of 'Turvey House'.)

Sarah Ann was a very capable wife, mother and homemaker. Of 10 children born between 1877 and 1901, nine (four girls and five boys) survived their parents. Ethel, the second child, died at nine months in 1880. In spite of many economies which had to be practised, the children were reared in a very happy home, growing up healthy and strong. A large orchard was established. A cow, horse and pigs were kept. Sarah Ann (Samuel called her "Annie"), with her family, regularly visited her parents at Woodend. When the family's yellow trap was not available, she would often push her pram and latest child over rough roads to Woodend and back (four miles one way).

Christmas day, in the early years, was always at Grandma Judson's, where aunts, uncles and cousins gathered, and in the afternoon - Judsons against the locals - was the cricket match of the day. As the family grew and married, the tradition of the Christmas family gathering was continued at King Street, where Sarah Ann and Samuel were grandparents. Sarah Ann was noted for her lively sense of humour, and always enjoyed the games, and especially having people round her and in her home.

Samuel served the district both in his trade and public life. His work often meant a week's absence from home when working at distant homesteads in North Canterbury. He instructed three of his sons in masonry and bricklaying, passing on skills and knowledge acquired by at least five generations of the family in continuous trade since 1750. Samuel carried on the family tradition by being interested in the church and in 1883 was made a trustee of Rangiora Wesleyan Church, and when he died was a senior Trustee. He sang tenor in the church choir, and his daughter Emily recalled a few weeks before her death that she seemed to have always been in the choir, beginning as a child on her father's knee. Samuel continued his trade as a bricklayer, using a horse and dray to carry his tools around. He was often away from home for several days - up to a week sometimes. In 1898 he bought the section next to and south of his home in King Street. This was used as an orchard where nearly every type of fruit and berry was grown. There was a pig sty in the farthest corner. The day when a pig was killed was evidently quite an event, and of course everything was used but the squeal!

The 2 1/4 acre block bounded on the north by the Oxford railway line, a narrow lane on the east (widened to become Durham Street in 1928) and Dale's right-of way to the south was the centre from which Samuel travelled throughout North Canterbury, building homes, chimneys and fireplaces, bakeries and their brick ovens, shops farm buildings, churches, and indeed anywhere that bricks were used. Today, eleven dwellings are

leave a comfortable home?". He had enough of that when working up country. In later years a fire-place was built. A small hut made of car cases was also built. This was the nucleus of the present bach which has been added to and altered many times over the years, ("Korka Camp", Pine Ave, Waikuku Beach).

On Saturday afternoons Samuel liked to take the family in the yellow trap to visit Grandma Judson. In the Autumn it was a constant worry to Prissy that a traction engine would come along the road and cause the horse to shy. Prissy said that those in the back of the trap would have to hang on "like grim death". If a traction engine did appear Sarah Ann would suggest that they turn into a gateway until the iron horror had passed. Prissy possessed a special feeling for these powerful monsters all her life.

A feature of the family life was music. Samuel had a fine tenor voice, while other members were also good singers. For a time Samuel would not have a piano - there was only an organ in the home. On occasions at Sunday School he would invite a young girl to play a hymn, but she would answer that she could only play the piano. Eventually a piano was bought when Thelma learned singing and music.

Household chores were different in those days. No electricity and mod cons. Washing day was an all day affair. The copper was outside the back door and the pump - later a tap - was nearby. On Monday morning a woman came to help. The clothes were boiled, rinsed well, and a lot were starched. Ironing was done with irons heated on the coal range, and then the clothes were ironed on the kitchen table with an old blanket and sheets as padding. The coal range was lit in the morning and used to cook breakfast, and any baking, and after the dinner was cooked it was left to go out. If anything was to be cooked for tea it was done over the dining room fireplace, but later a gas ring in the kitchen was used. Even the porridge was pre cooked the night before over the fireplace. Porridge like many other things took much longer to cook in those days.

There was no sink in the kitchen for washing the dishes. These were washed in a bowl on the kitchen table. The only tap inside was on the wall by the side of the stove. The hot water came from a small cylinder above the stove. This tap was made of brass which was kept polished, and was at the right height to be a temptation to small children. The stove and fireplace grates and surrounds were kept black-leaded and brass was also in need of constant polishing - especially the front doorstep - and the lamps and candles had to be checked. Sewing was also very different. Imagine making all those long frocks with lots of fine tucking on a hand-turned sewing machine. Hand sewing was done at night by lamplight.

The autumn years of Samuel and Sarah Ann's lives were memorable for the celebration of both their Golden and Diamond Wedding Anniversaries. These were occasions of great family reunions. (By the Diamond Wedding the family numbered over 50; the direct descendants by 1985 numbered over 240, by 2000 over 330). Samuel and Sarah Ann had every reason to be proud of what their family was accomplishing in industry, farming, commerce, political, church and public life.



included in this area, in addition to the brick home now noted by the Historic Places Trust as "a good example of the bricklayer's art". It is now owned and lived in by the second-to-youngest grandchild child of Samuel and Sarah Ann.

About 1926, part of this section was offered as a gift to the church for a new parsonage. This offer was accepted and the parsonage was built by his son Cecil.

Samuel bought various areas of land mainly in the King Street - Seddon Street area, and built several houses there. He opened up Seddon Street and when sections were offered for sale one morning they were all sold before 11am. There was no worry about filling in forms and Land Sales courts in those days! If Samuel cleared 10 shillings a day he thought he was doing very well. A street was put through from Seddon Street to High Street and named Ayers Street.

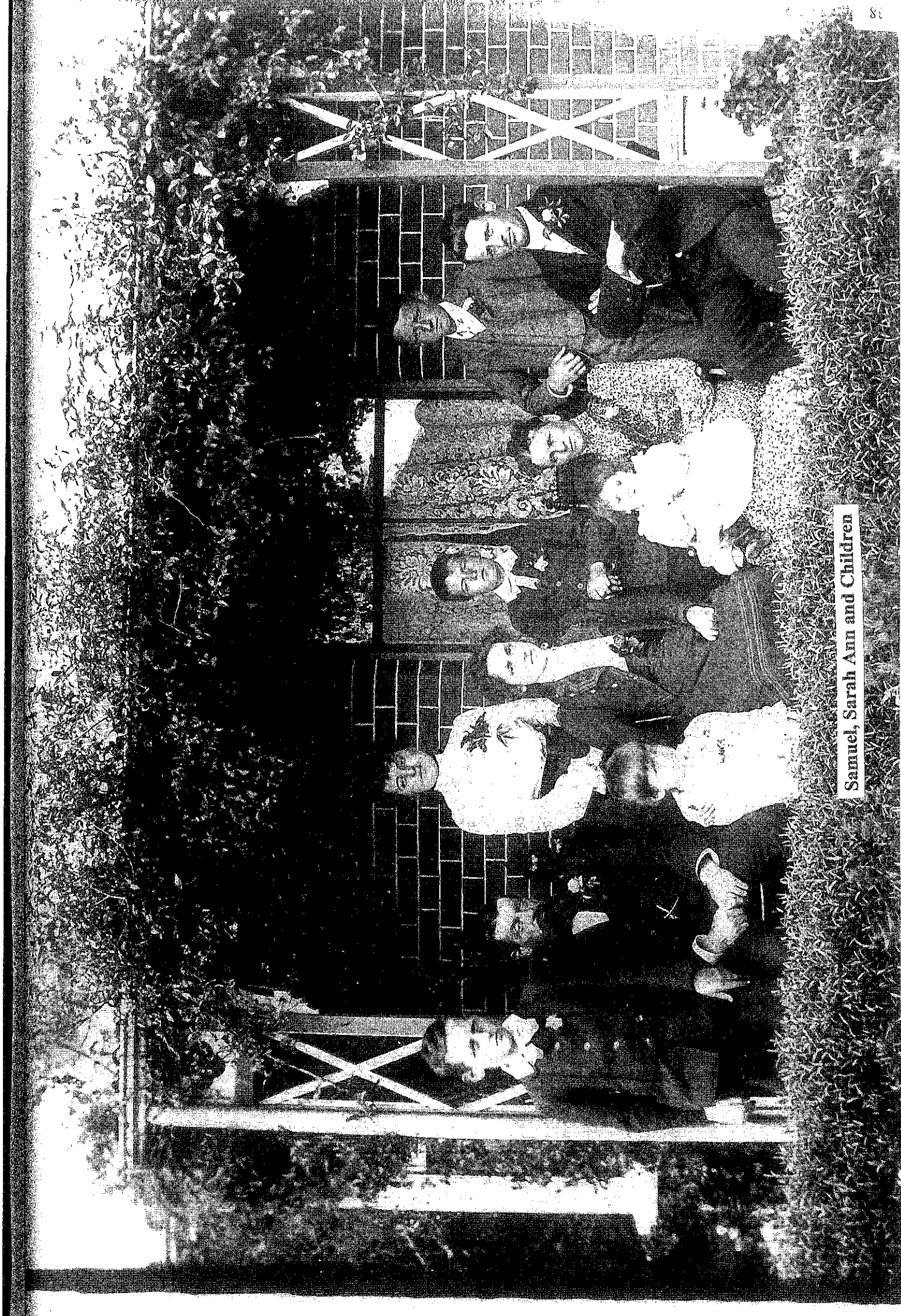
Samuel was a very well read man, and with the aid of a kerosene lamp would read and study far into the night. He was familiar with such authors as Thackeray and Dickens as well as reading "Punch" magazine. Modern novels and other light literature were not for him. On many a winter evening he read aloud to the family and happy laughter sounded through the house as he recounted some humorous event.

In spite of the many economies which had to be practised in those times the children were reared in a very happy home. They grew up healthy and strong. Early in their lives they were taught the love of God and faith in Jesus Christ. Every Sunday morning after breakfast those who were at home gathered in the dining room for family devotions which usually consisted of Bible reading and prayers. Samuel usually took the lead but others were encouraged to take part.

A special highlight for the family was Christmas Day at Grandma Judson's at Woodend. Here the Aunts and Uncles and cousins gathered. The Christmas dinner of roast goose, vegetables and Christmas pudding was held in the barn, and one can imagine the excited and happy chatter of that large gathering. A cricket match between the Judsons and local young men was played in the afternoon. In later years this family tradition was continued at the home in King Street, where children and grandchildren had Christmas dinner in the garage or under the old pear tree. A feature of the menu was cherry pie, and many tales are told of the hi-jinks with cherry stones! Sarah Ann was noted for her lively sense of humour and was one of the best 'shots'! The pear tree was usually turned into a Christmas tree, and Samuel looked the part dressed as Father Christmas.

Boxing Day was usually spent at Waikuku Beach. Thunder storms were always likely, and the only shelter on those occasions was under the old cart which was used as transport. The horse would become restive when it was time to return home and the family often had to run and then jump into the cart while the horse was rearing up.

Waikuku beach was also the place where the family camped during the summer holidays. Two tents were used. There was no fireplace but the lupins made good shelter. After about three days, Sarah Ann and Ida would return home to make more pies and generally replenish the stocks which had run low. Samuel never liked camping - "Why



Samuel, Sarah Ann and Children

## OBITUARY

### MR SAMUEL AYERS

One of the pioneer and best-known residents of the North Canterbury district, Mr Samuel Ayers, died at Rangiora yesterday at the age of 93. Mr Ayers was a resident of Rangiora since 1858, the year of his arrival at Woodend.

He was born in Turvey, Bedfordshire, on September 13, 1846, and came to New Zealand at the age of 12 with his parents on the ship Zealandia. The family settled at Woodend, Mr Ayers later following his father's trade of building and bricklaying. He married Miss Sarah Ann Judson, daughter of Mr and Mrs W. Judson, early settlers of Woodend, on June 16, 1875. Mrs Ayers was born at Eastall, on the border of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, coming to New Zealand with her parents on the ship Clontarf in 1859.

After his marriage, Mr Ayers went to Rangiora, where he built many of the early brick dwellings. His own residence in King street was built about 63 years ago at the time when the railway was first brought through to Rangiora.

Mr Ayers for many years took a prominent place in the activities of the borough and district. For a number of years he was a member of the Rangiora Borough Council, and he was responsible for the establishment of the residential area of Ayers street and Seddon street.

He was a founder and for many years a director of the Rangiora Investment and Building Society. He was also the last of the original trustees of the Methodist Church in Rangiora. He was a member of the church choir at Woodend for 15 years and at Rangiora for 63 years. He was delegate to the Methodist Church Dominion conference on 12 occasions, and taught at Sunday school for more than 50 years. He was also a foundation member of the No-Licence League in North Canterbury, and took an active interest in the Prohibition movement in the Dominion.

Among Mr Ayers's other interests were the Rangiora Primary School (he was a member of the school committee for some time) and the Oddfellows' Lodge. He was a trustee for a long period of the Loyal Rangiora Lodge, M.U., I.O.O.F., which he joined in 1873.

Mr Ayers is survived by his widow, nine children, 28 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. His sons and daughters are Mrs H. R. Taylor (Rangiora), Mrs P. Trebilco (Te Aroha), Mrs Wallace Finley (Hamilton), Mrs E. R. Wright (Culverden), Messrs C. S. Ayers (Rangiora), L. J. Ayers (Wellington), Hector Ayers and Harry Ayers (Methven), and S. W. Ayers (Christchurch).

A motion of sympathy with the relatives of Mr Ayers was carried by the annual conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand yesterday.

## **EARLY HISTORY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH AT KAIAPOI** (by Samuel Ayers)

I landed in Lyttelton September 21<sup>st</sup> 1858, a lad of 12, came straight to Gibb's-Town with my parents where my uncles were settled, but there were no Divine Service there.

On Sunday afternoon a Methodist Service was commenced in Mr Baker's house in Kaiapoi. The Rev. John Aldred was the Superintendent residing in Christchurch. He came up some time and held Service and then came on to Gibb's-Town and held Service in our house. He then called at the Maori Pa which was alongside the Cam at that time.

Mr Thomas Sharplin who was a sawyer in the Bush at that time often preached in Mr Baker's house there. If it was a hot afternoon he would take off his coat and preach in his shirt sleeves.

A movement was made to build a Church in Kaiapoi. I was at the first building Committee, but I was not a member, but just a boy waiting for my father who was on the Committee. The members of that Committee have all gone home. Mr Aldred was in the chair and a Mr Malinson an architect sent up a plan which was looked over by the members of the meeting and adopted. It was in the Gothic style with gables along the side and a school room at the back. It was not well built however, and the winds shook it very much. After the present Church was built it was pulled down and the timber used to build the school room on the same site.

The floods were very bad in those early times. In Kaiapoi on the day of the 1868 flood I saw the water was nearly to the top of the side windows and the books were all wet, also the seats. The harmonium were upset and floated about the Church. There were a good many minor floods. One afternoon the ladies were in preparing for a tea meeting - the water came and was knee deep around the Church as no notice of floods was given in those days. It was said that the ladies were wheeled out in wheel-barrows, but I was not there to see. I was the last over the bridge before it was swept away.

How about the present Church. It is built on a sand-hill to escape the floods. It is on a brick foundation which was given by the late Mr Joseph Stanton. Mr William Ayers did the work at Mr Stanton's expense and that was before concrete came into general use. Mr R. Wright was one of the contractors. After the building was opened the congregation went back into the old building for the next Sunday because the varnish on the seats was not dry. I was at the last Service in the old Church and the Rev. R. S. Bunn's text was from the 64<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Isaiah part of verse "Our iniquities like wind have taken us away". It was just when the Summer holidays were coming on not to be carried away too much by them.

## **A SHORT ACCOUNT OF MY LIFE IN CONNECTION WITH THE METHODIST CHURCH (by Samuel Ayers, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1935)**

I arrived in the Ship "Zelandia" on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1858, a boy of 12 years old. With my parents we went direct from Lyttelton to Gibbs-Town, afterwards called Woodend, because my mother's brothers - 4 of them were settled there, Gibbs was their name.

Some time after their arrival they handed Tickets of Membership to the Rev. Aldred with a request that services be started in our house. The Rev. W. Rowse was the first minister to conduct it. A Sunday School was started at the same time and the cause grew rapidly. A School was built on a corner of my father's section also a Church on another section in 1864 - I was a Sunday School teacher for 15 years there. I

was precentor in the Church about 7 years, without any instrument most of the time. The music books were separate from the hymn books in those days. It was said in Christchurch by the Local Preachers that they could give out any Hymn or metre in Woodend and the people would sing it.

About the year 1870 a start was made in Rangiora. A good section was bought in Ashley Street and a church was built on it. It prospered for a time, but the congregation suddenly left through no fault of our people. The Church was removed to Southbrook and the land sold. I had no thought of coming to live here then.

I was married to Miss S. A. Judson on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1875 and we came to live here at once. The King Street Church was built the following year. There were only 5 Methodist families in the town at the time, but it was a large circuit. We had a Bazaar that raised £200 and the Church was free of debt. A Parsonage was built afterwards in the Rev. J.A. Taylor's time.

We opened Sunday School at once with about 20 children. I was Superintendent for 10 years. It then numbered 100 when the late W.H. Foster took charge.

I then started a Young Men's Bible Class - Many of them are settled in the North Island doing good Christian work.

At our Diamond Jubilee we had sheaves of Telegrams and letters from them and from a great many other friends besides, and we would like to take this opportunity of thanking them all for their good wishes.

We are getting old now, but we enjoy fairly good health. God's blessing has been with us through all. Our company before us has gone and we are left almost alone. My good wife has been a true help-mate in Church matters and in home life.

### **A Letter to Samuel and Sarah Ann on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary from their son Stanley (in Oamaru at the time)**

*My Dear Father and Mother,*

*As I sit here in this cold and ignoble hotel my mind runs back over the years I spent in that warm and beautiful home, beautiful not in its pile of bricks, anyone can do that, but beautiful in the love which rules and emanates from it which you two as one, brought into existence. My mind dwells on the period of my boyhood with all its happiness and joys, on the times of correction and advice. I think too of the times when I sat on Dad's knee, looking at the quaint pictures of that old Bible, listening to him telling of its Great Truths. I think of when we all used to gather round the family alter every Sunday after breakfast. Then my mind dwells on these things and I realise the lasting impression for good that you two have made upon my life and character, I thank you both and call you "Blessed". As the child is father to the man, so are homes the nurseries of the nation, where the destiny of the nation is written, where the spirit of love and duty pervades the home - where head and heart rule wisely there, where daily life is honest and virtuous - where the management as sensible, kind and loving then we may expect from such a home an issue of healthy, useful and happy beings, capable as they gain the necessary strength of following in the footsteps of their parents, of walking uprightly, governing themselves wisely, and contributing to the welfare of those about them. Such has been our home and such is your reward for we as a family stand before you as a monument to your noble and beautiful lives and as there falls upon us the reflected rays of your glory so do we become great.*

*It has been said that Universal History is at bottom the history of Great men. Truly could it be said that it is the history of Great homes of great fathers and mothers, and although none of us is called to be great in the things of the world, yet you have planted good seeds in the national life of this young country and out of which may yet grow some strong vigorous and great life. In the fullness of God's good time such comes to pass, let him or her honour and bless you both.*

*Dad, I think of the uprightness of your life, and thank God for the example set before me. Mother I think of the love and the care in sickness and in health that you have bestowed upon me. I am reminded of the story of the little boy who sent an account to his mother, so much for the messages he had run that week, so much for the wood he had chopped, so much for this and so much for that, and when having finished it he placed it for his mother too see. His mother, wise and good she must have been, placed too her account for her little boy to see. So much for every day of all the years of his little life. When she had washed him, fed him, cleaned his boots, mended his socks and washed his clothes; cared for him while sick, and held his throbbing head while in pain and in fact for all the little things a mother must do, and the balanced it off with her love, so that his debt was paid. The little boy never sent his account again. Such is a mother's love, and such do I feel your love has been to me. We do not often hear of great women as we do of great men. It is of good women and good mothers that we hear of mostly. They accomplish their best work in the quiet seclusion of the home and family, where, while they may do no great outstanding thing, they do something far greater and better if they, at their knees, train upright and virtuous men and women. Therefore Father and Mother for your example and training I thank you both.*

*And now you have arrived at a great and glorious time of your lives, what a glowing and glorious evening tide, a glory that few husbands and wives behold, that of the praise of the community in which you have dwelt all your lives, and of the love and care of a united family. You have replenished the earth. In what degree of excellence must you both have kept that commandment, "Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that the days may be long in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee". In so much as you have kept it so has God kept his promise. How true too has come that word: "That which a man soweth, so shall he also reap". There is no doubt concerning what you sowed because the harvest is rich and glorious.*

*As you both stand together in the evening of your lives beholding the glory of the setting sun united by that mystic love of man and wife, looking down the vista of the years that are past, seeing again and perhaps feeling over again the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows, the storms and calms, when your frail barque tossed about on life's tempestuous sea perhaps well nigh coming to grief upon the ragged and cruel rocks which strew everyone's course, surely your united hearts go out to that great giver of every perfect gift. Indeed he has given you a great gift, a great joy, a great rest. Now that He has led you both into calm waters where you may ride at anchor, your hawser thrown around the Rock of Ages, may you feel safe in the love of God.*

*Oh, the beauty and the strength of the love you must hold towards each other. It has been tried in the furnace of fifty years, yet I feel sure your love is as young as ever and each sees in the other the lover of fifty years ago.*

*"A Golden chain let down from heaven,  
Whose links are bright and even,  
That fall like sleep on lovers, and combines  
The soft and sweetest minds In equal knots".*

*In this glorious light of fifty years think not that your sun has nearly set, for only the early tints of colour have yet appeared in the sky! These tints foretell however of the glory that is to come and when you both lift your anchors and pass out of the Haven in which you at present rest, Oh may there be no moaning of the Bar, as you pass out to sea, when in the fullness of time, (may he tarry yet), God calls you both home to his perfect Rest, you will go full of years, Reverenced and honoured by all who knew you, loved and mourned by all your sons and daughters and may you both hear that, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter though into the joy of thy Lord".*

*This Dear Father and Mother is my tribute,*

*Your loving son, Stanley.*



## 5. THE FAMILY OF SAMUEL AND SARAH ANN

Emily (Mrs Harry Taylor)	settled in Rangiora
Cecil	settled in Rangiora
Leonard	settled in Wellington
Ida (Mrs Phil Trebilco)	settled in Te Aroha district
Hector	settled in Lyndhurst (Methven)
Harry	settled in Methven
Stanley	settled in Christchurch
Prissy (Mrs Wallace Finlay)	settled in Puketaha (Hamilton)
Thelma (Mrs Ewart Wright)	settled in North Canterbury

### ROSE EMILY

Being a girl, and the eldest of nine children, Emily could have had very little time to herself during her growing years. She grew up to love company and was herself a good companion. She was initiated into household tasks at an early age, with a succession of babies to mind and usually a cow to supervise, when outside to play. She was in hot water once when the cow made a meal of garments hanging on the clothesline. One of her least favourite tasks was the picking of gooseberries, a chore which later fell to the lot of those grandchildren living near enough to help.

On leaving school she was apprenticed in tailoring and dressmaking to Mrs Hickmott, a martinet for perfection, who had no compunction in ordering work to be unpicked if she suspected that it had not first been tacked, even if it appeared perfect.

Bicycles for ladies were part of the scene by this time, and Emily was taught to ride by one of her admirers who had a bicycle shop. She used to cycle throughout the district to do a day or a weeks sewing at the various houses. She told of a place where a child playing in the room pulled from under the bed a shoe box containing some little cakes and was peremptorily told to put them back as they were for the dressmaker. Pay was small and included a meal.

Her Christian principles, firmly held, and her concern for the welfare of others, were shown in her staunch support for the W.C.T.U. and other Temperance causes generally.

Music played an important part in her life. She early learned to play the little organ that stood in the corner of the dining room in later years. Singing around the organ was a family occupation in the evenings and on Sundays, and this led to her becoming Church organist, a position she filled until she married and moved to Timaru. She was presented with a beautifully engraved gold watch and long gold chain by a grateful congregation. When she and Harry returned to Rangiora to live she became the relieving organist for a number of years. She had a fine contralto voice and was a faithful member of the church choir up to the last few years of her life. The acquisition of a fine piano made music of all kinds possible in her home, and encouraged by Harry who played the flute, musical evenings were a feature. She was a capable and sympathetic accompanist for singers and instrumentalists, and a small orchestra met regularly in her home for many years in the High Street house. She entered wholeheartedly into all special occasions.

Her creative ability led her to spend many hours making fancy costumes for civic processions and concerts, and she spent time, patience and enthusiasm in training groups of children, including her own four, in action songs for Sunday School Anniversary and Band of Hope concerts. She took a Family Concert party to out-lying churches a number of times, and organized camp-fire concerts at Waikuku Beach in the holidays. After her family grew up she still continued to invite friends to her home for the music they could make as much as for their conversation.

One thing she enjoyed a good laugh about was the mastery of the family tree which she displayed in her efforts to call someone in for dinner - going through up to a dozen family names - male and female - sometimes still not reaching the correct one! All the grandchildren learnt off the names of all the great aunts and uncles and cousins from an early age from hearing them reeled off so often at hailing strength.

Ivan's death at 18 years of age in an accident was a severe loss to her. She suffered poor health for some years, but she was never a complainer and always presented a cheery front never looking her age. She had a lively sense of fun which made her good company. She couldn't bear dissension of any kind, and actively strove to maintain peace and harmony around her. Throughout her long and active life she enriched the lives of her family and a wide circle of friends, and was greatly loved.

Emily and Harry celebrated their Golden Wedding in 1955 with a big gathering of family and friends. They died, ten days apart, in their own home ten years later, just a few months before their Diamond Wedding date and her 88th birthday.

## CECIL SAMUEL

Cecil was the eldest son of Samuel and Sarah Ann. He was born on October 4 1880 and died April 14 1966. He lived most of his life in Rangiora, following in his father's trade of bricklayer, and later operating as a builder specialising in concrete construction, using the first mechanical concrete mixer in North Canterbury, which he imported himself.

Cecil married Cordelia Duff on 16 April 1908. Cordelia was a very gifted person who had a book of her poems and prayers published. Her poems illustrate how much she loved her children and family times. Cordelia died from an infection soon after Kenneth the youngest of her four children was born. The other children were Edith, Dorothy and Colin.

Cecil married Millicent Carr who became a very capable mother to the children until she died in 1939. Their home 'Montilla' still stands on the corner of High Street and Ayers Street.

Cecil married Eleanor Doak (known as Nellie) in 1943 and 'Green Gables' in Durham Street became their home. Nellie was a wonderful hostess and very gifted at floral art-work and gardening.

Cecil's interests included music, being a keen member of the Rangiora Male Choir and the Rangiora Orchestra. He sang for over 50 years in the choir of the Methodist Church. This church was Cecil's spiritual mentor, and the early years of the Bible Class movement before and after the turn of the century set the mould for the pattern of his life: Superintendent of the Sunday School for many years; lay preacher for 39 years and filling the various offices open to a layman in the church from Trustee to Circuit steward.



## 6. MEMORIES OF SAMUEL AND SARAH'S GRANDCHILDREN

### MEMORIES OF VIVIENNE ELLIS (ROSE EMILY'S DAUGHTER)

(Interview by Barbara Spurr (Ayers) on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1999<sup>1</sup>)

We always came to the house (Turvey House) at Christmas, and we were also often around helping Grandma and Grandpa. Some of my first memories are of picking gooseberries in the garden. Grandpa (Samuel) would pick the big ones, and we picked the others. If we were very good we were allowed to take some home. The berry and current bushes (we had 3 different sorts) were beyond the orchard which was on the South of the house.

I remember<sup>a</sup> my high-school days well. The year that I was supposed to do matriculation, I was not at all well. It was just that I was getting my periods, and I had a lot of trouble, but no one told me what was going on. The doctors advised that I leave school in order to get better. I dutifully left and was sent up to stay with Auntie Prissy and Uncle Wallace and to help with the family. After several weeks there I was sent across to stay with Auntie Ida and Uncle Philip. Auntie Ida was most unwell and spent time in bed. Nobody told me anything about what was wrong as you didn't talk about things in those days. I must have been there two or three months, and I cooked and looked after the two children and ran the household. Uncle Philip was very helpful and kind. I heard very much later that it was probably a miscarriage that Ida had. I came back to Rangiora and helped out at home, and continued to play the piano. Before I had left school the headmaster Mr J. Strachan had come around to see my parents and had told them that he would hold a place for me at school if I ever wanted to go back.

I returned to school the next year and got my matriculation. I have some very vivid memories of school. I was told by Mr Strachan that I was on the student council, and I learnt how to run meetings. Mr Strachan also had picked a group of us that he said he would teach himself as we had special talents, and he thought we might win a scholarship to go on for further education. Mr Strachan was never there to teach us as he was always far too busy and needless to say none of us got a scholarship.

After matriculation I was accepted to train as a teacher. This training was to be at the Southbrook school, but just days before I was to start word came through that Southbrook was not able to take me after all. In those days you could not just travel to another school and I did not ever do the training to become a teacher. However I took on some piano pupils. Ken and Colin Ayers used to come before school and I'd have other pupils in the lunch-hour and after school.

Music was very much part of our lives and I would often wake up to the sound of music playing. Mum (Emily) would be on the piano and Dad (Harry) on the flute, with Cecil Ayers on the double bass and another friend on the violin. Dad and Mum had a lot of musical friends and I went into Christchurch to continue my piano lessons and examinations. I would stay with friends of Dad's overnight and come home the next day. Dad would play the flute with these friends and stay overnight sometimes too. Ivan would stay here overnight as well when he rode his motorbike into Christchurch for his cello lesson. It was after a cello lesson and

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<sup>1</sup> At a family gathering at Turvey House after the commemoration in the Rangiora Methodist Church of the stained-glass window in honour of Emily (Ayers) and Harry Taylor.

staying the night at these friends of Dad's that Ivan was killed while riding his motorbike in Bealey Avenue. He had internal bleeding but they couldn't diagnose where it was in those days and he died. Mum and Dad never got over it. He was about 17 I think and I think I was about 15.

I met Robert and we were married and lived just behind Mum and Dad and the war was approaching. Robert had a job with the North Canterbury Electric Power Board as an engineer, but as the war approached we let our strong pacifist feelings be known. Certain people on the Power Board did not approve of Robert's position with respect to the war and he lost his job. He then applied for jobs in the North Island and got one at the Hutt, where we shifted to. It was very hard during the war and we had some difficult times.

## MEMORIES OF COLIN AND KEN AYERS (CECIL'S SONS)

(Interviews with Barbara Spurr (Ayers) January 2000)

**COLIN REMEMBERS:** My first memory of grandpa was of him sitting me on his knee and telling me about Turvey and the statue of Jonah and his wife in the little Ouse river that runs through the village. It was a great thrill many years later to go to Turvey and see Jonah in the river with his wife, who was by that stage lying in the river.

We used to go to Grandma and Grandpa's on Sunday afternoons to visit, and listen to the gramophone and sing around the piano. Grandpa's time as a choirboy affected his whole life and he would only read the Bible or Thakeray.

In the hall on the ceiling was a puzzle which looked like a hinged wooden flap hanging from one end of a piece of wood the same size. Grandpa would push one end of the flap with his walking stick and it would then hang from the other end. The puzzle was how on earth could it hang from both ends consecutively. You had to puzzle it out yourself, he wouldn't tell you how it was done!

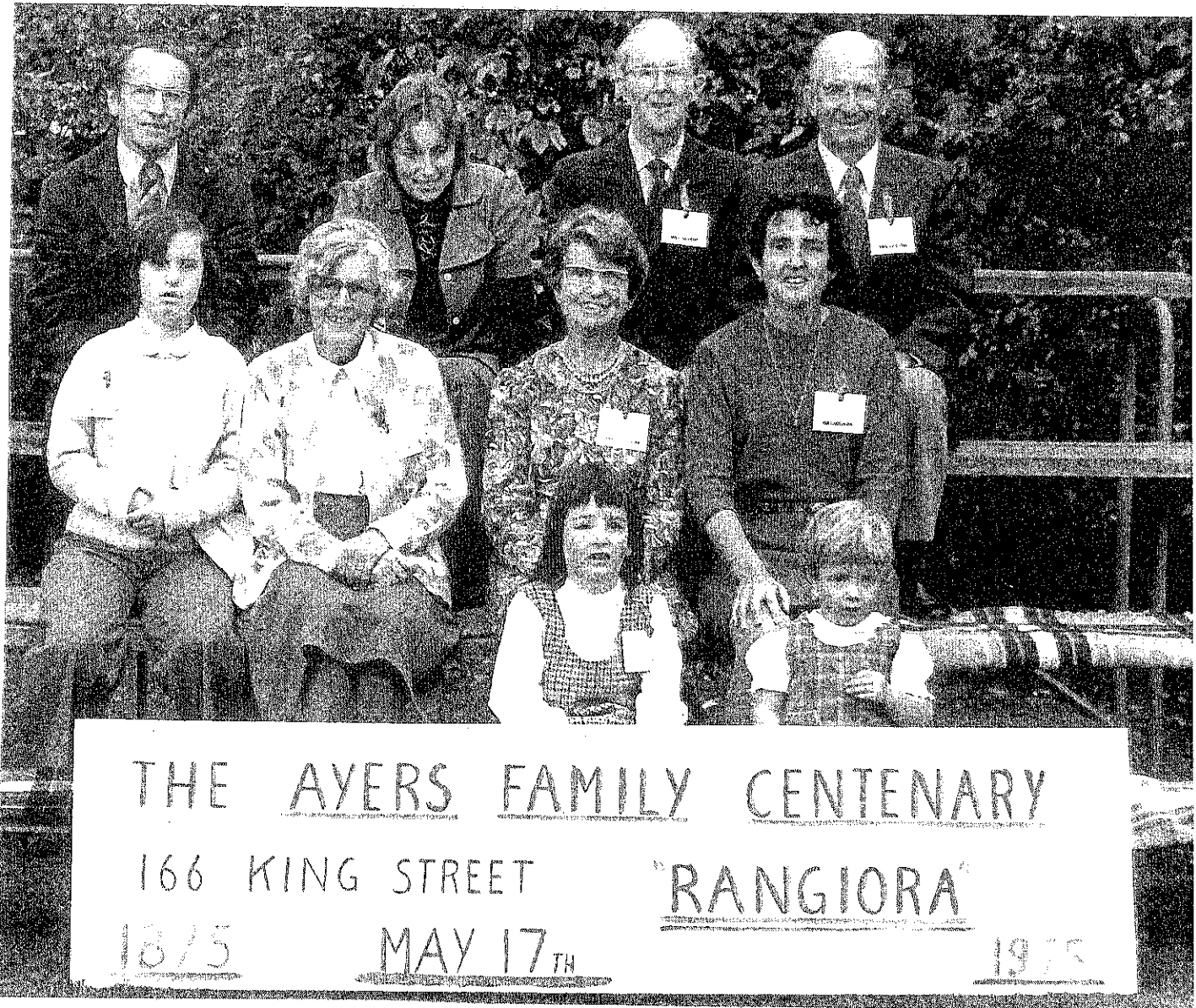
I remember Grandma being a fun person and someone who always entered into everything and of course she was remembered by all for her throwing cherry-stones at Christmas. Mostly Christmas was outside. We had tables by the pear tree which was decorated with presents.

I remember admiring a passenger van that Len had made with a jigsaw. This sat on top of the piano and I was in awe of it. It had glass windows and a step and a place for passengers. It was beautifully varnished. Len was very bright but although dux of Borough School Grandpa would not let him go on to further school and he had to go out and work. This was the cause of a rift between Grandpa and Len. Len was a lot of fun, and a bit like Jack Harris (Edith Ayers' husband) with his teasing.

Growing up, my dad was very strict. He would not tolerate anything that wasn't the truth. When Dad was Mayor of Rangiora, the Prime Minister Mr Forbes came to tea at Montilla once. I think we were probably sent outside to play as children were to be seen and not heard.

**KEN REMEMBERS:** I used to go to Grandma and Grandpa's every Sunday after church. It was okay, but sometimes I would rather have been at home, especially if we had visitors. Prissy always looked after me and made my time fun. I was Pageboy for Prissy at her wedding.

In about 1936, after Dad got the V8 (1934), our family and Grandma and Grandpa and Thelma in the Chev all went to the North Island for Christmas, and stayed with Ida and Phil and all the family on the farm



The Descendants of ROSE EMILY TAYLOR nee AYERS.

Kelvin Taylor, Geraldine Taylor, Robert Ellis, Ernest Crane  
 Alison Taylor, Marjorie Taylor, Vivienne Ellis, Wendy Crane  
 Sylvia Crane, Natalie Crane