

Ebenezer Tredgett - Edward Turner: Villain or hero? - Part 2

By Kelvin Turner, great grandson of Edward Turner via Ian Grenfell Turner and Edward's seventh son, H Ray Turner

New beginnings

Ebenezer was presented with a situation. Maude, a young lady working in his florist shop, had just informed him that she was pregnant. Edward was faced with a choice. Other men could have seen this situation negatively but for him it was an opportunity.

Ebenezer took the situation to create a fresh start. Once the couple had left Cambridge they weren't going back. A anecdotal comment handed down by the Tredgett family and passed on to a Turner family member stated he wanted nothing to do with his past.

The first thing he did was to change his name (both first and family) to Edward Turner. Maude retained her first name but adopted the new family name adding the title of "Mrs". They went one step further by hiding her maiden name. Her son Ray wrote in his autobiography he believed it to be Canham.

The couple used their new names when they signed the ship's passenger list. On the ship they presented themselves as a newly wedded couple. Newspapers printed statements attributed to Edward as having said his father had died and that, soon after, he and his brother sold the family business sharing the proceeds.

If the new name was to avoid detection it didn't work. The Otago Daily Times (June 4th 1885) reported their tickets were bought from a "intimate friend" of a family relative who received a tip-off. This information was possibly gained from a passenger on the ship. Another sighting of the couple on the same ship was "mentioned innocently" in a letter home by a crew member. This account was cited in the article published in the Cambridge Independent Press in their March 28th publication.

The choice of names

No definitive explanation has been recorded. The choice of Edward could have come from Maude's family. It is believed her brother's name was Ted. The choice of Turner for the surname is even harder to establish. Poetic license on my part suggests a play on Maude's maiden name. I make reference to the 18th century landscape painters.

Why New Zealand?

No written account suggests any destination other than New Zealand (including Australia). One account claims they told ship crew and passengers they were emigrating to Wellington to start a nursery as land was available.

The author K Stead in *One Hundred I'm Bid* (1997) writes that Edward said to Maude "Let's go where those apples come from." He tells us "they set off for Wellington". Harvey Turner also states that Wellington was their intended destination. In *Turners of Huia* (1966) we read "their ultimate place of settlement might well have been Wellington. It was the capital city of New Zealand and there was land available for an enthusiastic nurseryman." The New Zealand Herald might have agreed with the intention, to start a nursery business, but it believed its location was to be Auckland.

Did the couple Marry?

"Edward" and Maude lived in a common law relationship for twenty two years. Their daughter and the following seven sons were born before Edward and Maude married. The couple did marry but only after Edward's first wife Sarah died. The marriage ceremony was a civil ceremony conducted in a private home. The marriage celebrant was a Baptist minister. The attendees were limited to the bride, the groom, the officiator and two witnesses - the two eldest sons. Possibly one other person was present (the minister's wife).

Business activities

Edward took up many different roles during his working life. His first was nurseryman; he was a member of the Royal Horticultural Society. Then he became a shop keeper. He attempted being an orchard grower but his orchard was too far from the city. He then opened up a fruit business in partnership with two other businessmen which lasted a short time. He decided to re-establish his business model as a sole trader.

A new period began when the Auckland City Council established market buildings. Four businesses occupied the premises, his being one of them. At the same time he took on the career of auctioneer. At first it was general goods under a separate business. As an aside he also auctioned property. The combination of wholesaling fruit and auctioneering was the beginnings of a wholesale businesses known for over seventy as 'Turners and Growers.'

Life in Auckland

Edward and Maude lived together in Auckland for thirty three years; Maude another twenty five. Outside family and business forums, the couple were heavily involved in the broader Auckland community. Both were board members of the school which their first four sons attended. Along with three sons and two daughters-in-law, the couple were founding members of the Mt Albert Baptist

Church. Edward was one of twelve councillors in the first Mt Eden Borough Council.

The next generation

All nine sons were involved in church activities and the business. Several took up the baton of civil politics.