

James, Mary & Alexander

British 1820 Settlers to South Africa

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Chapter 1

James McDonald

1.1 Mary Welch

James McDonald and Mary Welch were wed on the 12th May 1817, at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate, Bishopsgate, City of London (FamilySearch 1817) (1820settlers.com 2021a). The marriage record shows James signing his name, while Mary made a mark ("+") next to hers. Both were listed as parishioners. Isaac Netto and Catherine Netto (née McDonald) witnessed the ceremony (Figure 1.1).

1.2 Immigration to South Africa

James, Mary, and their one-year-old son, Alexander, immigrated to South Africa with the British 1820 Settlers (Nash 1987, p. 46). Their names first appear in Alexander Biggar's settler correspondence. This letter, dated 27th September 1819, was addressed to Lord Bathurst from 3 Northumberland Court, Strand, London, in which Biggar proposed a list of potential members for his party to South Africa (eGGSA 2024a, pp. 536–539). They are also referenced in his later settler returns (Appendix 1.3.3 provides a complete list and further details) (eGGSA 2024b).

1.3 Birth

James's birth date, birthplace, and parents remain unknown. The most reliable source is Biggar's 1820 Settler list, which listed his age as 31 (eGGSA 2024a, pp. 536–539). This suggests a birth year between 28th September 1787, and 27th September 1788. However, settlers often inflated their ages to qualify for the program, so this estimate should be viewed with caution.

FamilySearch and 1820settlers.com suggest James McDonald was born on 9th October 1789, to William Wallace McDonald and Janet Aitchison in Crawford, Lanarkshire, Scotland, with a baptism on 11th October 1789 (FamilySearch 1789) (1820settlers.com 2021a). However, this lacks evidence to definitively link them. The birth date contradicts the age calculation above, and the suggested parents' names haven't reappeared among known descendants.

1.4 Death and Descendants

James must have died before the 7th November 1822. Marriage bans were published in Grahamstown on that date for Mary Welch's remarriage to Robert Henman (1820settlers.com 2021a) (1820settlers.com 2021b).

Alexander McDonald, born from the union of James McDonald and Mary Welch, is their only known descendant (Nash 1987, p. 46).

Chapter 2

Overview

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Appendix A

First Appendix

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