
James, Mary & Alexander

British 1820 Settlers to South Africa

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Contents

1	James McDonald	1
1.1	Marriage of James McDonald and Mary Welch	1
1.2	Immigration to South Africa	1
1.3	Birth	1
1.4	Death and Descendants	1
2	Overview	3
A	First Appendix	5
	Index	7

Chapter 1

James McDonald

1.1 Marriage of James McDonald and Mary Welch

On May 12th, 1817, James McDonald and Mary Welch were wed at St Botolph without Bishopsgate, Bishopsgate, London. 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. Their names first appear in Alexander Biggar's settler correspondence. This letter, dated September 27th, 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. They are also referenced in his later settler returns (Appendix 1.3.3 provides a complete list and further details).

1.3 Birth

James's birth date, birthplace, and parents remain unknown. The most reliable source is Biggar's 1820 list, which listed his age as 31. This suggests a birth year between September 28th, 1787, and September 27th, 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 October 9th, 1789, to William Wallace McDonald and Janet Aitchison in Crawford, Lanarkshire, Scotland, with a baptism on October 11th, 1789. 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 November 7th, 1822. Marriage bans were published in Grahamstown on that date for Mary Welch's remarriage to Robert Henman.

Alexander McDonald, born from the union of James McDonald and Mary Welch, is their only known descendant.

Chapter 2

Overview

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Appendix A

First Appendix

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Index

First Appendix, 5

Overview, 3