

C/- Post Office
Beaconsfield, 3807.

14th February 1989.

Rev. Murray Little
Uniting Church of Australia
Stratford, 3862.

Dear Rev. Little,

Thank you for your letter. I am enclosing the book prize won by my grandfather at your Sunday School in 1880.

James White Hagan Wilson was a remarkable man who lived to the age of 96 years. He was tall and broad-shouldered, a kind and gentle man with a keen sense of humour, and a great love of nature, reading, and a generous man with his time and substance.

His parents, John and Eliza (nee Hagan) were of Scottish descent but were married in Northern Ireland, and sailed from farmland near Belfast in May 1863 on the "Queen of the South" on its final voyage to Australia. They were sponsored by a relative, James Hagan, to work on his farm "Glenfield" at Upper Maffra West, where my grandfather was born. He was the first of seven children. 27th December 1865. (date of birth)

They moved to Nuntin and their own little farm and James received a certificate from the Nuntin State School at age of 14 to say he was "sufficiently schooled" -- a forerunner of the grade eight Merit Certificate. He was given a good grounding in arithmetic and English writing; and his home life and Sunday School gave him a good Christian upbringing. He was a loyal Presbyterian all his life and regular in church attendance.

The Wilson family moved on to run the general store at Seaton for a short time, and then on to farming at "Orchard Valley" between Seaton and Glenmaggie on the bank of the Glenmaggie Creek. James's father, John Wilson, was an elder of the Presbyterian Church at Glenmaggie and held in very high esteem.

James fell in love with one of his nearest neighbours, Annie Sarah Fullerton, the elder sister of authoress and poetess, Mary E. Fullerton, author of "Bark House Days". James married Annie at their local church on 2nd September 1890 and they went farming in the hill country at Traralgon South for the next 12 years.

In 1902 they removed to dead flat country -- the opposite extreme -- on the Carrum Swamp, living on a farm called "Erindale" on Wells Road. The Mornington Peninsula Freeway was built right over the site of their home in the 1970s. James had one child, Alan Fullerton Wilson, whom he kept in the Carrum North Presbyterian Sunday School until he was 15. Alan also became a farmer and a very upright man.

James, Annie and Alan moved to "Wongaburra" farm on Hammond Road, Dandenong, about 1919. James was President of the Shire of Dandenong in 1921 and a leader in the Masonic Lodge and also a Justice of the Peace. Eventually his failing hearing forced him to curtail his public life.

When Annie died in 1943, James sold "Wongaburra" and went to live in a cottage, "Lilycroft", alongside Alan and Violet (nee Crump) on their farm "Ayrhill" at Beaconsfield. A cousin of both James and Annie, Muriel Grace Wentworth-Coates (known as "Queenie") from Glengarry became James's housekeeper. In 1958 he decided to retire from active farming, at the age of 92, and he and Queenie moved to "Fair View", a cottage in Reser Street, Berwick, which overlooked the Casey Airfield. But he was struck down by a stroke at 93½ years and spent his final two years bed-ridden in various hospitals, mainly the South-Eastern Memorial Hospital at Caulfield. He died in January 1962 and was buried in the same grave as Annie at the Dandenong General Cemetery, half a mile across country from "Wongaburra". Their tombstone describes them as "Children of the Pioneers of Glenmaggie".

He had only the one son and one grand-child, an author, Myrtle Joan Wilson, who took after Annie's family, but the love of nature and farming went on to each generation.

Yours sincerely,

Myrtle Wilson
(Miss) Myrtle Wilson.