

## Rachel Jane Cheriton DONALDSON, nee McDONALD 30-1-1867 to May 1951 & John DONALDSON

Biography as published in 1985 & 1995

Rachel Jane was the tenth and last child, fifth daughter, of Ewen and Rachel McDonald and was born at their home at Lower Finnis in South Australia. The name Cheriton is clearly from Rachel's brother-in-law John Cheriton. Her grandparents were Christina and Donald McLean.

The year 1867 was of great historical interest: the United States made the fortunate purchase of Alaska from Russia; Joseph Lister announced his practice of antiseptic surgery using phenol, carbolic acid; Johann Strauss wrote the *Blue Danube Waltz*. In Australia Henry Lawson was born, and Adam Lindsay Gordon published *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*, becoming the first Australian poet to be recognised overseas.

Rachel Jane, Jenny, came to Victoria with her family as a little girl of seven years. Her niece Christina McDonald, daughter of Donald William, recalled in 1973 that Aunt Jenny and Uncle Angus had gone to school at Noradjuha. The Noradjuha school No. 1930, opened in 1877 when thirty-nine pupils were enrolled. During the week Jenny boarded with the Simmons family near the school.

Jenny joined her sister Maggie and husband Charles at Warialda in New South Wales as nursemaid and governess, to their children. It is said that she taught school in the area at one time. She also owned a property near the Mott relatives which she ran herself and named *Craigmuir*.

In the late 1890s, Jenny married John Donaldson, of *Pine Hills*, Warialda, a widower with one son and five daughters. John was born in 1854 at Newry, Northern Ireland, the son of James and Margaret Donaldson, nee Austin. The family lived on a farm at Kilkeel near Belfast. James Donaldson migrated from Northern Ireland in the *Red Jacket*, arriving in Melbourne in 1855. He travelled to Tower Hill in Western Victoria and from there wrote to his wife Margaret instructing her to sell their farm and bring the children to Australia. Margaret and the family arrived at another Belfast, now Port Fairy, on Victoria's south-west coast in 1857. James and his family worked a farm overlooking the crater of Tower Hill, an extinct volcano, a few miles from the sea. Margaret died at Tower Hill and was buried in the cemetery at its base, beside the Princes Highway. James eventually retired to Warrnambool. He was also buried at Tower Hill cemetery. He and Margaret are buried with two of their children, and a monument marks the grave.

James and Margaret had ten children: Mary Ann born 1843 in Ireland; Samuel born 1844 in Ireland; James born 1846 in Ireland; Sarah born 1849 in Ireland; John born 1854 in Ireland; Margaret Jane born 1855 in Ireland; Martha born 1856 in Ireland; Elizabeth born 1861 at Purnim, Victoria; Theresa born 1863 at Purnim; Annie Matilda born at Tower Hill.

The three boys, Samuel, James and John, became selectors in Horsham district. Sarah married William Cust in the Wimmera. Their son Albert George was born at Stawell. At 25 years he married Jean McCracken, at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Horsham, on March 2, 1904. Margaret Donaldson died at 20 years. Martha married a brother of Charles Mott. The youngest Donaldson, Annie, died at six years.

The Wimmera Shire rate book first shows the name Donaldson in 1873. That year lists James Donaldson, Samuel Donaldson and Margaret Jane Donaldson, all as farmers, of Natimuk. The names continue in 1874 and 1875. The year 1876 shows more detail: James Donaldson, 280 pasture acres, 40 cultivated acres, dwelling and fencing, nett annual value £40, rate at 12 pence in the pound, £2, paid June 2, 1876; Samuel Donaldson, 283 pasture acres, 36 cultivated acres and fencing only; Margaret J. Donaldson, 280 pasture acres, 40 cultivated acres, fencing; John Donaldson, 319 acres 3 roods 33 perches. The same names are entered in 1877, and John then had a dwelling on his block. In 1878 and 1879 the names of Samuel, John, James and Martha L. are listed; no entry for Margaret Jane.

About five years after their arrival the Donaldsons decided to leave the Wimmera and settle near Warialda in northern New South Wales. John was left behind to sell the farms, and to join the others later. In Horsham, on April 23, 1879,

John married Helena Mary Heard, aged 19 years, daughter of Samuel and Mary Heard, nee Parsons. John and Helena journeyed to Warialda and made their home on a property named *Pine Hills*. Here their first eight children were born. When the ninth child was due, Helena, decided to go to the Warialda hospital. A week after the baby's birth she died on septicaemia, aged 36 years.

John and Helena's children were Margaret Louisa, born January 20, 1880; John Austin, born November 30, 1883; Annie Matilda, born September 23, 1881; Beatrice Helena born August 9, 1886; Theresa Edith, born April 14, 1888; Henry Cyril, born 1890, died 1893; Norman Bowland, March 6, 1893 to December 29, 1893; Gwendoline Pearl, born May 4, 1894; Helena Dorothy, born May 1, 1896, died at 6 months. John Austin, born 1883, married Miss Ela Rickard, known as Granny Donaldson, who will be 98 years old in 1985. After Helena's death John engaged Rachel Jane McDonald as housekeeper. They married several years later. Jenny continued to care for her husband's first family as well as her own.

An expert horsewoman, Jenny brought with her three favourite horses, Mollie and her off-spring Amy Castle and Madame Melba. John and Jenny's four children were all born at *Pine Hills* and educated by a governess until they moved to Armidale after the death of their father. John owned three properties, *Pine Hills*, *Roseneath* and *Bendee* which he had bought from his brother Samuel. He was a shire councillor at Warialda and served a term as president. John died of chronic heart disease on March 23, 1909, aged 55 years, and was buried in Warialda cemetery.

Jenny and her children stayed on *Pine Hills* until the estate comprising the three properties was sold in 1912. Samuel Donaldson bought back *Bendee* and in due course left it to John's son Austin whose descendants live there still. Jenny and family moved to Armidale where the children attended Miss Crossman's private school and then Armidale Public School. In 1916 they moved to Sydney where the family lived first at Murray Street, Croydon, then at Old South Head Road, North Bondi, and finally at Beecroft. Many holidays were spent at Springmount where their cousin Jim Mott christened the little boys 'Splinter' and 'Nugget.'

With the changed circumstances after the death of her husband, horsewoman Jenny now adapted herself enthusiastically to the motor ge and for many years drove her own car between Sydney and Armidale. When the road, now the New England Highway, was first scratched out over the Moonbi Ranges between Tamworth and Bendemeer, Jenny Donaldson was the first woman to drive a car down the perilous descent. When a newspaper article described the feat she became a local celebrity. During the first settlement of the district these ranges had been a terrible trial to many a bullock driver and his toiling team, both for the ascent and the dangerous descent. On one trip over this notorious track, whether her first or a subsequent one is not known, Jenny had on board her sons Ian and Norman and a friend, Mrs. Monaghan. The radiator boiled and they pulled up at a stream, using the boys' panama hats to fill the radiator with water. Resuming the journey, Jenny asked her friend to pull out the linings of the hats to dry, meaning pull them out far enough to dangle away from the straw. Mrs. Monaghan, however, took the instructions literally and ripped them right out — brand new hats! It was no surprise to find the brake linings of the car burnt out at the end of that journey.

On one occasion she accompanied her brother Angus on a trip to their relations in the Horsham area of Victoria, a visit still remembered by some of the clan. To her brothers and sisters she was often known as 'Jig'; to the younger fry, Aunt Donaldson, a woman of strong character and dry wit. Jenny died in Sydney in May 1951 and was cremated there.

#### Children of Jenny and John :-

1. Ina Jean Donaldson	Born 5-10-1898		Biographies 5191
2. Irene Rachel Donaldson	Born 5-10-1901	Died 26-10-1959	Biographies 5192
3. Ian Angus Donaldson	Born 17-3-1903	Died 19-5-1949	Biographies 5193
4. Norman Charles Stewart Donaldson	Born 15-7-1904		Biographies 5194

- SOURCE : This biography was from page 219 of "History of Ewen & Rachel McDonald & Descendants" by Jill McDonald which was originally published in 1985. It was republished as part of "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" in 1995.
- COLONIALISTS : Christina and Donald McLean and their ten children migrated from Argyllshire to South Australia in 1837. This was in the earliest years of the colony. The McLeans initially settled near Adelaide where they grew the first wheat crop in SA. Then in about 1840 they pioneered the Strathalbyn area. There are now well over 20,000 descendants spread across Australia and elsewhere.
- CHANGES : Please contact us with additions, corrections or suggestions about any part of this family tree.
- CONTACT : Visit our website [www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com](http://www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com) or Strathalbyn Museum phone 08 8536 2656 to discover more about your family – and about privacy and copyright.