

## JOHN KANE and ADA MARY SMYTH

### PREFACE

This is one of several biographies of my maternal ancestors in Australia, whose family tree is shown on the following page. John Kane Smyth (1836-1891) and Ada Mary Sands (1857-1946) were my great-grandparents. John emigrated from the U.S.A. to Melbourne, Australia as a young man. Ada was born in Sydney, New South Wales, where they were married.

The biographies in this series are:

Frances Mills (1781-1837) and her Many Partners

Thomas Kelsey (1804-1866) and Mary Johnson (1802-1877)

Richard Whiting (1811-1853) and Susanna Harley (1812-1867)

Thomas Moore (1821-1890) and Mary Jane Kelsey (1827-1874)

John Sands (1818-1873) and Marjorie Moffat Chisholm (1830-1904)

William George Whiting (1838-1917) and Amy Jane Moore (1853-1935)

**John Kane Smyth (1836-1891) and Ada Mary Sands (1857-1946)**

Keith Moore Whiting (1882-1939) and Mary Grant Smyth (1887-1969)

George Boyd Connor (1919-2014) and Sybil Kane Whiting (1922-1995).

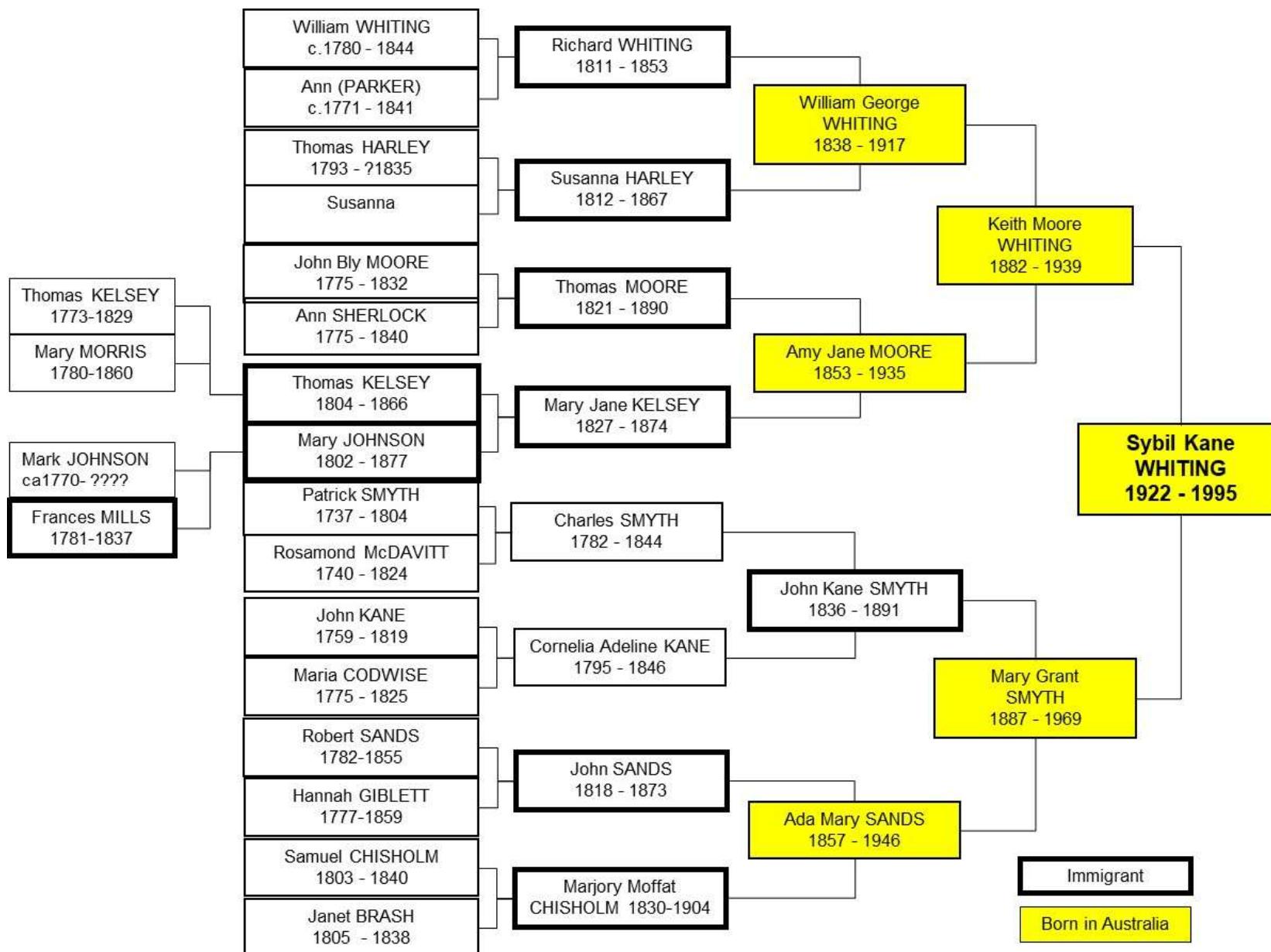
Each of the stories can be read in isolation. Inevitably, there is overlap between them, so some repetition is unavoidable but I have tried to keep this to a minimum. For easy reference, family trees are included at the end of each story.

Many people and organizations have provided research material for this story. In particular, the National Library of Australia 'TROVE' database was an invaluable resource. Ancestry.com.au provided transcripts of many important records of the Smyth and Sands families. My thanks go to them all. I have included references to important events and facts as footnotes on each page.

Andrew George Connor  
Perth, 2018

© 2018 Andrew G Connor. All rights reserved.

## MY MOTHER'S ANCESTORS



## JOHN KANE and ADA MARY SMYTH

### John Kane Smyth's early life.

John Kane Smyth was born in Albany, New York State, U.S.A., on 16 February 1836 and baptised on 10 May<sup>1</sup>. He was the younger of only two children born to Charles Smyth and Cornelia Adeline Kane, but both his parents had been married before and had produced children. John and his full sister Mary Grant Smyth, known as 'Molly', had five half-brothers and one half-sister from Charles' first marriage (to Margaret Fryer), and two half-brothers and two half-sisters from Cornelia's first marriage (to Rev. Paschal Neilson Strong) – see appendices. The eldest of the combined siblings was born in 1806, and John's nearest sibling, Molly, was five years older than him, so John really was the baby of the family, and possibly a surprise. However, by the 1840 census, the household at 78 Hudson Avenue, Albany consisted only of Charles, Cornelia, Molly and John, and one other teenage female, possibly a servant. All the other siblings had left home - two had died before John was born. John was very close to his sister Molly, who cared for him like a mother.

The family was not very wealthy. John's grandfather, Patrick Smyth, had been a successful merchant, first at Albany and then at Fort Edward, Charlotte County, New York. In 1777 he lived "*in affluent circumstances*"<sup>2</sup>, but Patrick and his brother George sided with the loyalists during the American Revolution, lost everything they had and, after a period in captivity, fled to New York City. At the end of the Revolution in 1782 as the British were evacuating New York City, Patrick Smyth and his family (including baby Charles) fled to Sorel, Canada. Charles started with almost nothing. He returned to the U.S.A. and established a river transport and trade business with a store at 68 Quay St, Albany on the Hudson River. Over 25 years in business, Charles began several river and lake transport ventures, none of which were hugely successful. He first married Margaret Fryer and they had eight children.

The Kane family didn't fare any better during the American Revolution. Their estate near Fredericksburg, Dutchess County, New York (now Patterson, Putnam County) was occupied by George Washington as his headquarters for two months during 1778, and was confiscated by the Americans at the end of the revolution. The Kane family, with fourteen children, fled firstly to New York City and then to Nova Scotia. After a few years there, the sons returned to the United States and established a very successful trading house, the Kane Brothers, with trading posts along the Hudson and Mohawk River valleys, and international connections. The Kane children married well, and reconnected the family to American wealth and high society.<sup>3</sup> John Smyth's grandfather, John Kane Jr., was the eldest of the Kane Brothers; Cornelia was John Kane Jr.'s eldest child. Unfortunately, the Kane Brothers business empire collapsed due to the trade embargoes and the monetary crisis associated with the War of 1812, and John Kane Jr. lost his fortune<sup>4</sup>. He had little to leave to his children, so when Cornelia married her first husband, Rev. Paschal Strong, in 1816, there was no dowry. Paschal and Cornelia had four children.

John Smyth never knew his grandparents. His father Charles Smyth died at Albany in February 1844, aged 61, and his mother Cornelia followed in October 1846, aged 51, leaving Molly and John as orphans. John was only ten-years old. Fortunately, Charles and Cornelia came from large families so, as well as half-siblings, there were many uncles, aunts and cousins who could take care of them (see appendices for the Smyth and Kane family trees).

<sup>1</sup> "St Paul's Church Albany Baptism Registers -1836" New York State Library, Collection ID SC23629 Box 20.

<sup>2</sup> "Patrick Smyth (1737-1804): Loyalist, Privateer and Intelligence Courier" by Ross D Petty. 2016. Unpubl. Manuscript.

<sup>3</sup> "Story of John Kane of Dutchess County, New York" by Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane. 1921 pp82-87

<sup>4</sup> "Story of John Kane of Dutchess County, New York" by Elizabeth Dennistoun Kane. 1921 pp108-110

Letters from Molly Smyth to her brother John<sup>5</sup> indicate that their half-sister, Cornelia Kane Strong, welcomed the orphans into her family at Albany. In 1846, Cornelia's family comprised her husband, William Wallace Forsyth and children Emily Howe Forsyth (aged 8), Sarah Seymour Forsyth (aged 5) and Russell Forsyth (aged 4). Another son, William Douglas Forsyth, was born in 1848. Molly and John called Cornelia Strong Forsyth "Sister" and quickly adopted their younger Forsyth nieces and nephews.

It seems that many of the Smyth and Kane family members regularly kept in contact with each other. John's Aunt Maria De Peyster<sup>6</sup> was one of those who glued the families together. She visited her relatives regularly and wrote to them about family events. She was a very religious and God-fearing person, whose letters to John were full of pastoral and parental advice. The Kane family originally belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church – the first of Cornelia Kane's marriages was performed according to the Dutch Reformed Church. Molly and John were brought up to be regular church-goers. Molly and many other members of the Kane family later joined the Episcopal Church, which split from the Anglican Church in post-revolutionary America. Molly taught at St Paul's Episcopal Sunday School and, later, urged her brother John to do the same.

After his mother's death in 1846, aged about ten, John was sent to the Erasmus Hall Academy in Flatbush on the outskirts of New York City. This was a boarding school tied to the Dutch Reformed Church, with the Rev. Richard D Van Kleek as its principal<sup>7</sup>. After completing his high school education, John Smyth did not go on to university but decided to follow the tradition of his Smyth and Kane ancestors and relatives and become a merchant. When gold was discovered in Australia in 1851, and as the demand for passages and provisions to the Australian goldfields from Europe and America grew, the transatlantic traders began to show some interest in the southern continent. Americans were looking at Australia as the next frontier – potentially a new republic in America's image, and a place of opportunity<sup>8</sup>. In 1850, the Panama Canal was just a gleam in the eye, so to reach Australia, sailing vessels still had to go around one of the Capes, usually the Cape of Good Hope, to take advantage of the westerly trade winds across the South Indian Ocean. By early 1853, there were numerous ships in New York and Boston harbours planning voyages to Australia<sup>9</sup>.

John's uncle William Wood (a Scotsman, and the husband of Harriet Amelia Kane) was a Director of a major international trading house Dennistoun, Wood and Co. of New York. The Dennistoun group of companies was founded in the 1820s by Alexander and John Dennistoun of Glasgow, and opened subsidiaries in London, Liverpool, France, New York and New Orleans. In late 1852, they decided to open another branch of the business in Melbourne, Victoria, to participate in, and benefit from Australia's anticipated growth. The new company, named Dennistoun Brothers and Co., was established in 1853 "for the transaction of Exchanges, Produce and General Commission Business, in connection with J. and A. Dennistoun, of Glasgow; Alex, Dennistoun and Co., of Liverpool; Dennistoun, Wood, and Co., of New York; and A. and J. Dennistoun and Co., of New Orleans. The business of Dennistoun, Brothers, and Co., will be conducted by James McCulloch, formerly of Glasgow, and Robert Sellar, formerly of New York."<sup>10</sup> Robert Sellar was well-known to the Kane family, having worked in New York with William Wood. Robert Sellar and James McCulloch sailed from Southampton and arrived in Melbourne aboard the steamer *Harbinger* on 21 April 1853<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Letters dated 29 Jan 1855 and 1 Mar 1855 from Mary G Smyth in Albany to John K Smyth in Melbourne.

<sup>6</sup> Maria Antoinette Kane 1798-1869; m (1) John Hone Jr in 1817; m (2) Frederic De Peyster in 1839.

<sup>7</sup> United States Federal Census 1850. Ancestry.com

<sup>8</sup> e.g. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 15 Oct 1852, pp2

<sup>9</sup> Launceston Examiner 31 May 1853 pp5

<sup>10</sup> The Argus 21 May 1853 pp8

<sup>11</sup> The Argus 22 Apr 1853 pp4

Within a month, they had established their company in Melbourne and started advertising for business.

Through his family connection, John K. Smyth managed to get a job with the fledgling Dennistoun Brothers and Co. to work for Mr. Sellar and Mr. McCulloch in Melbourne. With 243 other emigrants, he boarded the sailing ship *Euphrasia* in New York and left there on 26 February 1853, shortly after his seventeenth birthday, bound for Australia via the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>12</sup> John was not in a first-class cabin.

The voyage was a long and eventful one. The ship encountered a severe gale in the Atlantic and was forced to take shelter at Bahia, Brazil. While in port, there was an outbreak of yellow fever and one of the passengers died. The *Euphrasia* departed Bahia on 29 April, departed Cape Town on 25 June and, after 163 days, arrived in Melbourne on 8 August 1853.<sup>13</sup>



The *Euphrasia* at Liverpool, 1847. By Samuel Walters

## Victoria. Learning the trade.

When John Smyth arrived in Victoria, the gold rush was in full swing. Shiploads of immigrants from Europe, Asia and the Americas were arriving in Melbourne and heading north to the goldfields, however surviving on the goldfields was difficult and many gravitated to Melbourne where they ended up in poor circumstances. Melbourne was outgrowing its infrastructure; shanty towns developed around its fringe, and disease was always a danger. John was one of a lucky minority who had a secure position waiting for him, and probably some accommodation as well.

---

<sup>12</sup> New York Tribune, 2 Mar 1853 pp8

<sup>13</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 9 Aug 1853 pp4



Canvas Town, South Melbourne in the 1850s

Between July 1851, when Victoria was declared a separate colony from New South Wales, and 1855, the population of Victoria quadrupled to about 300,000. In response to this growth, roads, railways, water supplies, schools, hospitals and housing had to be built, and in order to administer this, the Victorian parliament was established in 1855. Gold was what paid for it all, and the colony was very wealthy. John Smyth lived through this exciting period in Melbourne's history, and Dennistoun Brothers and Co. was very profitable. Their in-bound ships carried passengers and cargoes of provisions. Their first ship from New York, the *Bavaria*, carried flour, Pilot bread, water crackers, barrels of mackerel, boxes of herring and cod, pork, bacon, ham, lard, cheese, dried apples, peaches and plums, champagne, clocks, tobacco, candles, brooms and brushes, basket-ware, buckets, pails, tubs, boxes, bowls, camp stools and wire sieves<sup>14</sup>. To handle these cargoes, the company had stores in Flinders Lane-west, an office at 69-71 Collins Street-west, Melbourne, and they needed staff to account for movement and sale of stores, and for dealing with customs, chartering and selling vessels, arranging passages etc. For out-bound ships, Dennistoun Brothers' main cargo was wool to London, Liverpool or Glasgow, which they purchased direct from producers, or advanced loans to producers secured against their future wool clip<sup>15</sup>.

As the colony and the gold fields rapidly matured, so did the demand for manufactured goods. Dennistoun Brothers responded to the change. Building materials, road making machinery, ploughs, harrows, shovels, picks, canvas, bar iron, pig iron, lead shot, lead pipe, lead sheet, gun- and blasting powder appeared on their ships' manifests. Imports of alcoholic drinks and tobacco increased – Dennistoun Brothers were sole agents for Barrett's tobacco (U.S.A.) and Tennent's brewery (Glasgow). The company needed additional storage space for this increased business, so they built a new store in 1856 at the corner of King and Little Collins Streets. The managing directors, Messrs. McCulloch and Sellar, became leaders of the business community in the city. McCulloch became President of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, and, in 1856, pushed for investment to improve Melbourne's port and river transport facilities. Business and political interests were almost indistinguishable at this early stage of Victoria's development – the first elected Victorian parliament, which opened on 21 November 1856, was dominated by businessmen and pastoralists<sup>16</sup> (squatters). James McCulloch was elected member for the seat of Wimmera in the Legislative Assembly. He

<sup>14</sup> The Argus 27 May 1853 pp12

<sup>15</sup> The Argus 19 Oct 1853 pp8

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/council/publications-a-research/information-sheets/7-the-legislative-councils-history>

maintained his directorship of Dennistoun Brothers and Co., although Robert Sellar took on a greater role in the day-to-day operation of the business.

The young John Smyth would have been employed in back-room roles at Dennistoun Brothers and Co as he served his apprenticeship. In an 1855 letter describing Molly Smyth's marriage to Lewis Wightman Rathbone, his aunt Maria de Peyster advised him, "*I hope dear John that you are doing your best, to deserve the confidence and respect of your employers. Everything depends upon yourself, and your dependence is upon your God. Seek Him, and he will be found.*"<sup>17</sup> As the business grew, John would have been forced to learn quickly and, as his mentors Messrs. McCulloch and Sellar took on wider roles in the Melbourne business community, John would have been expected to take on greater responsibility within Dennistoun Brothers and Co. No doubt it was an exciting and challenging start to his career. By 1857, aged 21, John Smyth would have been a capable merchant businessman.

The success of Dennistoun Brothers and Co. was temporarily halted when, in 1857 as production from the Californian goldfields declined, there was a loss of confidence in continued growth of the American economy. This led to failure of some American railroad companies, a fall in the price of wheat, the foreclosure of farms by banks, flow on falls in land prices, panic withdrawals from banks, and lack of credit. Flow of profits from the Dennistoun houses in New York and New Orleans dried up, so that the Dennistoun houses in Glasgow, Liverpool and London could not repay their creditors in a timely manner. On 7 November 1857, the head office in Glasgow reported their embarrassment and the companies were suspended. It was made clear that Dennistoun Brothers and Co. in Melbourne was not compromised and would continue trading.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the company had to agree with its creditors an instalment plan for repayment of loans.<sup>19</sup> The agreed amounts were repaid in full, with interest, ahead of time, and confidence in the company was restored.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Maria De Peyster to John K Smyth, 22 October 1855.

<sup>18</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 11 Jan 1858 pp1

<sup>19</sup> Stirling Observer (Scotland) 3 Dec 1857

<sup>20</sup> Dundee Courier 1 Dec 1858



A young John Kane Smyth (date unknown)



Robert Sellar



(Sir) James McCulloch

Perhaps the business scare prompted John Smyth to investigate alternative business ventures because, in October 1858, he applied for a “*Patent for Improvements in Machinery for Crushing Quartz and for Amalgamating.*”<sup>21</sup> This was one of 254 patent applications dealing with crushing of quartz and recovery of gold that were lodged in Victoria between 1854 and 1866. John’s patent design was probably from America. It resembles many other inventions of the time, most of which were found to be impractical in the field. A review of the design in a local mining journal did not express huge hope for the machinery<sup>22</sup>, and there is no evidence that the machinery was ever constructed and tested. Wisely, John retained his position at Dennistoun Brothers and Co.

<sup>21</sup> The Age 3 Nov 1858

<sup>22</sup> Colonial Mining Journal, Railway and Share Gazette 3 February 1859, page 6

Outside of working hours, John almost certainly attended church on Sundays – probably a Presbyterian Church. John took up cricket, which was also popular in America at that time. He joined the Richmond Cricket Club and played in the 3<sup>rd</sup> XI in 1860. There is no record that he distinguished himself on the field, although by the 1861-62 season he was promoted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI<sup>23</sup>. John was appointed to the club committee in 1860 and elected treasurer of the club in September 1862. He continued in that role until 1865. No doubt he also enjoyed the social interaction at the Royal Hotel on Punt Road, the club's unofficial clubrooms, across the road from the Richmond Cricket Ground (now Punt Road Oval).

In 1861, the Dennistoun brothers in Glasgow decided to sell their interest in the Australian enterprise. On 30 September 1861, they announced that Dennistoun Brothers and Co., Melbourne, would be dissolved and, from 1 October 1861, the business would be carried on under the firms of McCulloch, Sellar, and Co., Melbourne, and Leishman, Inglis, and Co., London.<sup>24</sup> The managing directors in Melbourne, Messrs McCulloch and Sellar, remained the same and a new director, John Inglis of London, was added to the board. From John Smyth's point of view, little changed except that the corporate links with the U.S.A. had been broken. Robert Sellar (now a married man) remained his boss and mentor, and the nature of the business did not change appreciably.

In June 1863, James McCulloch became Premier and Chief Secretary of Victoria, as leader of a coalition in the Legislative Assembly between his liberal party, representing pastoralists' interests, and a radical left party. Two of his priorities were to reform the Land Act, and to remove tariffs between Victoria and New South Wales. While Premier, McCulloch retained his co-ownership and directorship of McCulloch, Sellar and Co., which, at that time, was expanding its pastoral interests in Victoria and New South Wales. Both of the reforms, if achieved, would have made it easier and cheaper for his company (and others) to operate and grow which, he argued, was also to the benefit of the colony, but he faced a hostile Legislative Council, and interference from the British parliament and Governor. There were numerous accusations of conflicts of interest, which he had to defend constantly. On one occasion, McCulloch read a statement by John Smyth, representing McCulloch, Sellar and Co., to the Assembly, vindicating himself from a charge of having profited by the remission of duties in connection with the alteration of a tariff<sup>25</sup>. As time went on, it seems that John became more involved in the pastoralism and wool-brokering aspects of the McCulloch and Sellar business empire.

## **Partnership with Hastings Cunningham**

After five years with McCulloch, Sellar and Co., John Smyth (aged 32) joined the firm of Cunningham & Macredie as a partner on 1 June 1868<sup>26</sup>. Cunningham and Macredie was a Melbourne-based wool-brokering partnership established in 1863, which was pioneering wool sales in Australia as an alternative to the prevailing system of consigning wool to overseas (mainly London) brokers, speculators and sale rooms. From a wool-grower's perspective, local sales eliminated some of the commissions and tariffs associated with exporting and transporting wool, and the interest on bridging loans taken while he waited several months for his wool to be sold. Cunningham and Macredie also recognised the need to market, not just

<sup>23</sup> The Age Nov 1861 page 4

<sup>24</sup> The Argus 5 October 1861 page 8

<sup>25</sup> Gippsland Guardian 20 August 1868 page 2

<sup>26</sup> The Age 4 Jun 1868

sell, Australian wool, so they invested in improving the local flock through breeding, protecting the fleece during growth, and washing the shorn fleece before sale. They provided finance to those who wished to buy and sell through the local market, and they published the auction prices achieved in their regular sales so that wool-growers could plan ahead. The firm also acted as a stock and station agent, willing to advance funds against future sales. The firm operated the Australasian Wool Stores in Collins Street, Melbourne.

In 1868, William Macredie, decided to leave the partnership to establish the National Insurance Co. On the day that John Smyth became a partner, Cunningham and Macredie was dissolved and the new partnership was named Hastings Cunningham and Co.<sup>27</sup> Hastings Cunningham and John Smyth, being in the same industry, had probably met quite often over the preceding five years, and might have known each other socially through the Church. Hastings Cunningham "was noted as a good friend to any young man trying to get on"<sup>28</sup> and, with Macredie's departure, was looking for a new partner. John may have disliked being embroiled in the politics associated with McCulloch, Sellar and Co., so the move was probably mutually advantageous.



Hastings Cunningham

From 1869 onwards, John K. Smyth is listed in the Sands and McDougall Directory of Melbourne under Hastings Cunningham and Co., wool brokers and stock and station agents, wool stores, 144 Collins St West and Little Flinders Street West. His private residence was in St Kilda, a beach-side suburb. When the St Kilda Presbyterian Church was built in 1877 (expanded in 1880) with Sir James McCulloch as its principal benefactor and trustee, this became John's local church.

In September 1870, John Smyth and Dugald McDougall (of Sands and McDougall) became foundation policy holders of The Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria, a newly established life assurance company<sup>29</sup>. Although tenuous, this is the first documented connection between the Smyth and Sands families. John Smyth must have become a close and trusted friend of Dugald McDougall because in June 1876, Dugald appointed John as a co-executor and co-trustee of his will and, under the worst circumstances, guardian of his children<sup>30</sup>.

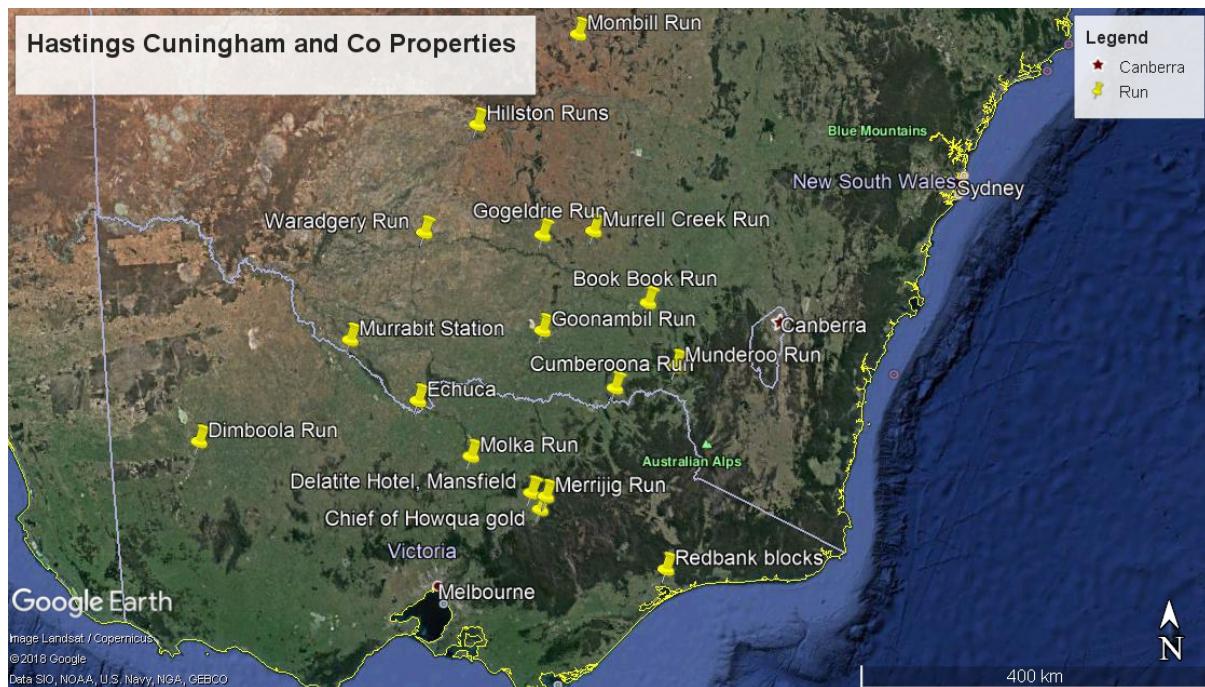
Hastings Cunningham and Co. prospered during the 1870s. The two partners expanded their wool store in Collins Street in 1872, doubling its capacity. John Smyth (on behalf of the partnership) became involved in the fledgling meat-preserving industry at Echuca. The partners leased numerous pastoral runs throughout Victoria and New South Wales, as shown on the following map. These were mainly sheep grazing properties located along the major rivers. They also acquired smaller blocks near Bairnsdale, interests in some speculative gold mining ventures, and the Delatite Hotel at Mansfield.

<sup>27</sup> The Argus 23 Jun 1868 page 7

<sup>28</sup> Obituary in the Pastoralists' Review, 15 Oct 1908.

<sup>29</sup> Age 26 Sep 1870, p.1

<sup>30</sup> Will of Dugald McDougall. Public Records Office of Victoria. VPRS 7591/ P2 unit 101, item 29/675



No doubt John Smyth spent much of the 1870s travelling throughout Victoria and New South Wales, inspecting and monitoring the company's own leases or "runs", and also doing business with other pastoralists and graziers. John became a wool specialist for the partnership, grading and estimating the value of future wool clips, and attracting sales (on commission) of wool, hides, tallow and some grains through their wool store in Collins Street.

Hastings Cunningham and Co. made loans to pastoralists and graziers which were secured against station assets and/or a future wool clip. They charged interest on the loans at up to 9% p.a. (on which they made a nice margin), and a commission of 1.5% on sales of product. Hastings Cunningham and Co. also acted as agent for the sale of pastoral leases and stock on commission, usually 5% of the proceeds. Many properties changed hands under their agency<sup>31</sup>. One consequence of the business was that the partnership became involved in twenty-seven civil court cases during the 1870s, mainly as the plaintiff, attempting to recover debts ranging from £60 to £700.

In April 1873, John Smyth left Melbourne on an eight-month long fact-finding mission (cum holiday) to the European end-users of Australian wool. His friends and business connections threw a going-away party for him at the Union Club Hotel in Collins Street. Robert Sellar was the MC, who said that he had known John Smyth for more than twenty years, and could testify to his sterling business talents, thorough integrity, and genial disposition<sup>32</sup>. As John's reputation in Melbourne grew, he was invited to join other business organisations. In September 1876, John was appointed to the Council of the Free-trade League of Victoria, and belatedly, as a commissioner for Victoria at the Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition in Sydney<sup>33</sup>. He represented wool growers in deputations to the Victorian Government to repeal an ill-conceived tax on livestock in the colony. In September 1879, John Smyth was nominated as Vice Consul General for the United States at Melbourne, and his appointment was ratified by the U.S. Congress in January 1880<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Wagga Wagga Express 25 Jun 1879 p.4

<sup>32</sup> Argus 28 Mar 1873, p.5

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Victorian Commissioners to the Sydney Exhibition of 1876. 10 May 1877. Vic. Govt Printer

<sup>34</sup> Congressional Directory 29 January 1880

As was popular at that time, Hastings Cunningham and John Smyth decided to convert Hastings Cunningham and Co. into a public company. With capital from England, borrowed at lower interest rates than could be obtained in the colony, on 3 August 1878 they formed Hastings Cunningham and Company (Limited), with subscribed capital of £750,000, in 150,000 shares of £5 each. In two or three days after the announcement of the project, the number of shares reserved for allotment in the colony (100,000) was fully subscribed. They appointed a board of directors; Sir James McCulloch K.C.M.G. (politician, pastoralist and businessman), Thomas Shaw (wool expert and sheep breeder), John Lang Currie (pastoralist and sheep breeder) and Archibald Fisken (pastoralist). Hastings Cunningham and John Smyth continued as the managing directors.

Hastings Cunningham and Company Limited restructured their business again in June 1880. The Australasian Mortgage and Agency Company Limited was incorporated in Great Britain and Melbourne, with the sole purpose of *“taking over and extending the old-established business of Hastings Cunningham & Co. (Limited) of Melbourne, Australia.”* The proposed business model remained the same – lend money in the colonies at higher interest rates than the borrowing rate in Great Britain, against mortgages *“upon freehold land, stock, stations, growing wool, and other securities, and the realisation on commission of pastoral and agricultural produce either in the colonies or after shipment to England.”*<sup>35</sup> The new company issued 50,000 £5 shares in Great Britain and 50,000 £5 shares in Australia, paid up to £2 each. The company appointed a board of directors in Great Britain, which included John Inglis. The Australian board and managing directors were the same as for Hastings Cunningham and Company (Limited). Hastings Cunningham and Company (Limited) was voluntarily wound up in 1883, and the partnership between Hastings Cunningham and John Smyth expired in July 1888 through effluxion of time (20 years).

John Smyth's reputation as a businessman continued to grow in the early 1880s. He was appointed to the board of the Commercial Union Assurance Company (of London). He was founding director of the Chief of Howqua N.L. (a gold prospecting company with interests in the Victorian highlands), and of the Asia Tin Mining Company (with interests in the Morina tin field in Tasmania). John's main claim to fame, however, was his appointment as honorary commissioner for the United States at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-81.

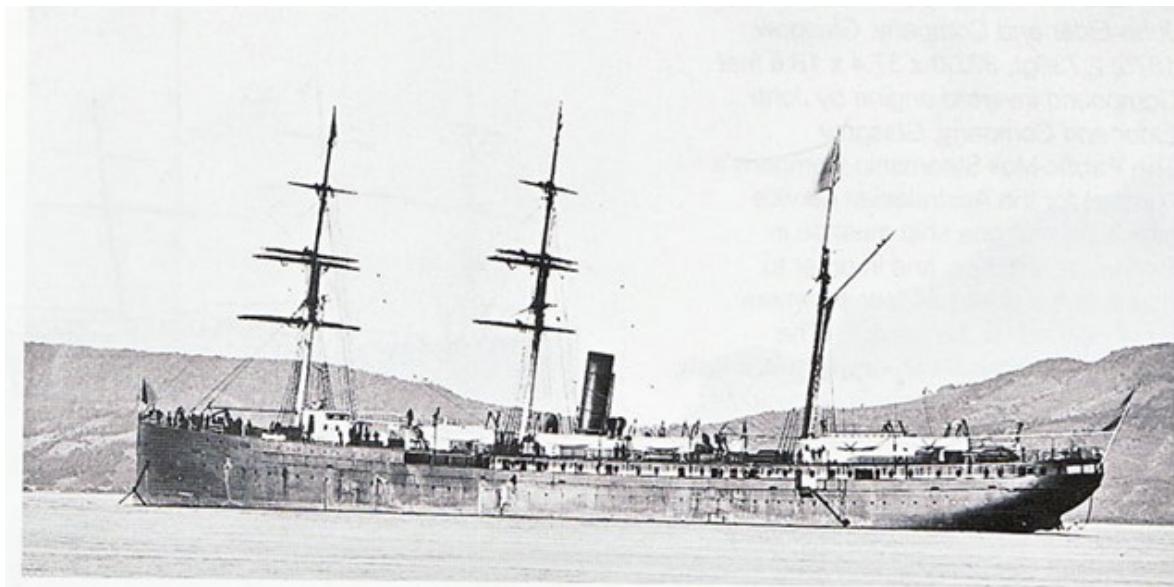


The Melbourne Exhibition, 1 Oct 1880 - 30 Apr 1881

Towards the end of the Melbourne International Exhibition, John returned to the U.S.A. to visit his family. He had been away for twenty-eight years and, in that time, his sister Molly had married Lewis Wightman Rathbone and had a daughter, Cornelia Kane Rathbone, whom John

<sup>35</sup> Aberdeen Journal 2 Jun 1880

had never met. John sailed from Sydney on the 24 February 1881 aboard the steamship *City of New York*. It was a very rough passage to Auckland – John was one of only six of the total seventy saloon-class passengers who appeared for meals. Four or five days after leaving Auckland, there was a crash and the engine stopped. The crank pin of the propeller shaft had broken and it was found that the spare pin was 1 ½ inches thicker than the broken one. It took many days to chisel out the old pin and re-model the spare to fit. Radio was not available then, so they had no way of communicating their plight to anyone. British and U.S. warships were sent in search, but the *City of New York* eventually reached Honolulu under her own steam, thirteen days late<sup>36</sup>.



The R.M.S.S. *City of New York* at Auckland<sup>37</sup>.

They found Honolulu in the midst of a smallpox outbreak, so transit passengers were not allowed to land, much to their frustration, but Captain Seabury decided he would ignore the quarantine and take on sixty second-class passengers for San Francisco. The Australian passengers signed a letter to the captain formally objecting to his decision and declaring that they would hold the shipping company liable should disease break out or for any quarantine delay on arrival at San Francisco. John Smyth, in his capacity as US Vice Consul, was the first to sign the letter, followed by Mr. Justice Webb of Melbourne. They arrived at San Francisco on 3 April 1881 without any health issues, but subsequently, Captain Seabury and the chief engineer were dismissed.<sup>38</sup>

John took a train to the eastern seaboard to visit his family. One of the places he visited was Bar Harbour, Maine, a wealthy, summer seaside town where the following studio portrait was taken. It is interesting that John is surrounded by female relatives. At age 45, single, well-off and well-respected, he was probably a good catch for someone, but there is almost nothing in the Australian newspapers about John Smyth's pre-marital social life. I suspect he was under some pressure from Molly to get married, and his female relatives might have attempted some matchmaking while he was on holiday in the United States.

<sup>36</sup> Telegraph (Brisbane) 2 Oct 1930, p11

<sup>37</sup> Built 1875, Chester, PA. Photograph by Alexander de Maus. Ships in Focus record No 35. Wrecked in 1889 on rocks at Point Bonita, on leaving San Francisco Bay during fog.

<sup>38</sup> Telegraph (Brisbane) 2 Oct 1930, p.11



Bar Harbour, Maine, 9 Jul 1881.

L to R: Louisa H Strong (nee Hall, 57, of New Orleans); Mary Grant Smyth (21, with hand on JKS' shoulder); John Kane Smyth (45); Helena Forsyth 'Nellie' Ellis (20, in front); Cornelia Kane Rathbone (23, with open parasol); Mary Grant Rathbone (nee Smyth, 49) and Harriet R. (illegible, of Savannah).

John departed San Francisco on 31 July aboard the *City of New York* under Captain Cobb and arrived in Sydney on 30 August 1881 without incident<sup>39</sup>. On 2 September, he returned to Melbourne by train and buried himself again in work. That holiday was the last time John would see his sister Molly, because she was tragically killed in a horse-drawn carriage accident at Albany, New York, in October 1882.<sup>40</sup> Molly left her daughter the Tiffany silver service she had received from her husband at her wedding. Pieces of this service have been handed down to the Smyth family in Australia.



Silver coffee pot and milk jug, engraved "M.G.S."

Made by John C. Moore, Tiffany & Co, Broadway N.Y. Pattern No 295, 1855-56

We can't be sure when John Smyth first met his future wife Ada Sands, but it seems likely that it happened at his friend Dugald McDougall's residence in Riversdale Road, Hawthorn, Melbourne. Ada was great friends with her first cousin once removed, Amy Constance MacLeod Chisholm, who lived with the McDougalls after her parents died<sup>41</sup>. Ada's brothers, Robert and John Sands, also lived in Melbourne while learning the printing trade at Sands and McDougall. Ada and her mother visited their relatives in Melbourne often.

John Smyth's social life received a boost when his half-nieces, Mary Grant Smyth (24) and Katherine Colt Smyth (46), daughters of printer Henry Murney Smyth and Charles Smyth junior

<sup>39</sup> Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser 3 Sep 1881

<sup>40</sup> Delaware Gazette (Delhi N.Y.) 4 Oct 1882

<sup>41</sup> Dugald's wife, Mary Allot Chisholm was Amy's older sister, by 18 years. Dugald and Mary 'adopted' Amy in 1874.

respectively, came from America to stay with their uncle John in Victoria for a year or so from May 1883. John probably felt obliged to introduce his guests to his Australian friends, and perhaps they badgered him to socialise more. Or perhaps they viewed John as a potential husband. They both were granted adjoining Pastoral Leases at Borung Victoria in 1883<sup>42</sup>. In August 1884, John took his nieces to a vice-regal reception at Government House<sup>43</sup>. Probably the first family John introduced them to was the McDougalls. Dugald's sister-in-law Amy Chisholm (22) had recently married John Sands, and Dugald had five children of his own, the eldest (Florence) being 20. During 1883-84, there were many opportunities for John Smyth (47) and Ada Sands (26) to meet at the McDougall's place.

## Ada Mary Sands' early life.

Ada was the fourth child, and second daughter, of John and Marjory Moffat Sands (nee Chisholm). Ada's elder sister, Edith Jane Sands, aged two, died of bronchitis two months before Ada was born on 22 November 1857 at the family home at 255 Albion Street, Surry Hills, New South Wales, now an inner Sydney suburb. John and Marjory eventually had four sons and Ada, their only surviving daughter, would have been special.



The Sands' home, *Marmion*, 21 Albion Street, Waverley

Compared with her brothers, we know little about Ada's childhood and education. John Sands was interested in breeding dogs, and the family had a pet long-haired Skye terrier named *Dandy*. When Ada was about four, the family moved to a large house with expansive grounds at 21 Albion Street, Waverley, which they called *Marmion*.

<sup>42</sup> "Australia, Victoria, Government Gazettes, 1851-1907" Ancestry.com

<sup>43</sup> The Argus 2 Aug 1884

By that time, the Sands family was quite wealthy, thanks to the success of John Sands' printing and stationery business. No doubt, there were servants and probably a nanny at *Marmion* to look after the young children. Ada's mother Marjory and her aunt Jane were devout Presbyterians, so it's likely the children were also indoctrinated in that faith, and went to church regularly, where Jane was the Sunday School teacher. Marjory and Jane were also philanthropists, donating their time and money to various charities and causes. They encouraged young Ada and her brothers to do the same<sup>44</sup>. The oldest Sands boys were educated at The Kings School at Parramatta, one the most prestigious boys' schools in the colony, so it's also likely that Ada was sent to one of the numerous privately-run schools for young ladies, which catered exclusively to the daughters of Sydney's wealthy businessmen.



Ada Mary Sands<sup>45</sup>

Before the age of 10, Ada had been introduced to her Chisholm cousins in Victoria and Queensland. Her Queensland relatives were second cousins, the offspring of Agnes Chisholm (1809-1883) and William Watson (1807-1886), who had emigrated to Brisbane in 1852. Ada did not visit them very often, however, Ada visited her Victorian relatives often because of her father's business partnership with Dugald McDougall in Melbourne. Ada had first cousins at Warrnambool, Victoria, the offspring of Marjory's older brother George Henry Chisholm (1822-1886) who also survived the loss of the brig *Australia*, and Mary Ann O'Neill (1833-1885). One of George and Mary's daughters, Matilda Alice Chisholm (1857-1928), was the same age as Ada. In Melbourne, Dugald McDougall's wife, Mary Allott Chisholm (1843-1902) and their ward, Amy Constance McLeod Chisholm (1861-1930), were first cousins once removed. Dugald and Mary's five children were Ada's second cousins, and she became quite close to

<sup>44</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 28 May 1868, p.1

<sup>45</sup> The left side of Ada's mouth always drooped a little, and became more obvious as she aged.

this family. Ada and her brothers, Robert and John, seemed comfortable sailing unaccompanied to Melbourne and back.

Ada's father, John Sands, died on 18 August 1873 at *Marmion*. He had been ill for some time, so the family were prepared for it, but he was only 54<sup>46</sup>. Ada was fifteen. After his death, Marjory ran the business on her own but, after a couple of years, she took her son Robert as a partner and handed over much of the responsibility to him. In fact, all the children took some responsibility in representing the Sands family at company functions. Ada occasionally presented prizes at the annual company picnic.

As a result of John's death, the partnership with Dugald McDougall in Melbourne expired. Marjory and Dugald decided to go separate ways. Sands and McDougall in Melbourne and Adelaide became the McDougall's business exclusively, although they kept the Sands name. Partnerships that existed between Robert Sands and Son in London and the Australian companies remained in place. These business rearrangements did not, however, weaken the family ties between the Sydney and Melbourne Chisholm relatives.



Ada Mary Sands, aged 20

In 1877, Marjory decided that Ada (19) should take an opportunity to meet her Sands relatives in London, and to broaden her geographical and social horizons. On 10 March 1877, Marjory and Ada sailed to Melbourne where Ada joined Dugald and Mary McDougall, and Amy Chisholm for the voyage to Southampton aboard the R.M.S.S. *Assam*<sup>47</sup>. Marjory must have felt some trepidation sending Ada away, remembering her own dreadful experience in coming

<sup>46</sup> NSW Death Certificate 2295/1873

<sup>47</sup> The Argus 23 Mar 1877, p.4

to Australia 37 years before. Marjory gave Ada a prayer book as a parting gift, remembering how prayer had sustained her during the loss of the brig *Australia*.<sup>48</sup>

There are no records of what Ada did during her fifteen months in England and Europe. No doubt she met and stayed with her Sands and Tingle cousins in London for some of the time, and perhaps visited Chisholm relatives in Scotland. She returned to Sydney on 24 June 1878. Ada seemed to spend her time in Sydney attending receptions, charity events and dances, with occasional trips to Melbourne.



Ada Mary Sands

One of these trips was to attend the marriage of her brother, John Sands, to her cousin, Amy Chisholm, in March 1883 at the McDougall's house in Riversdale Road, Hawthorn. John Smyth and his American cousins, Mary and Katherine Smyth, may have been there as well.

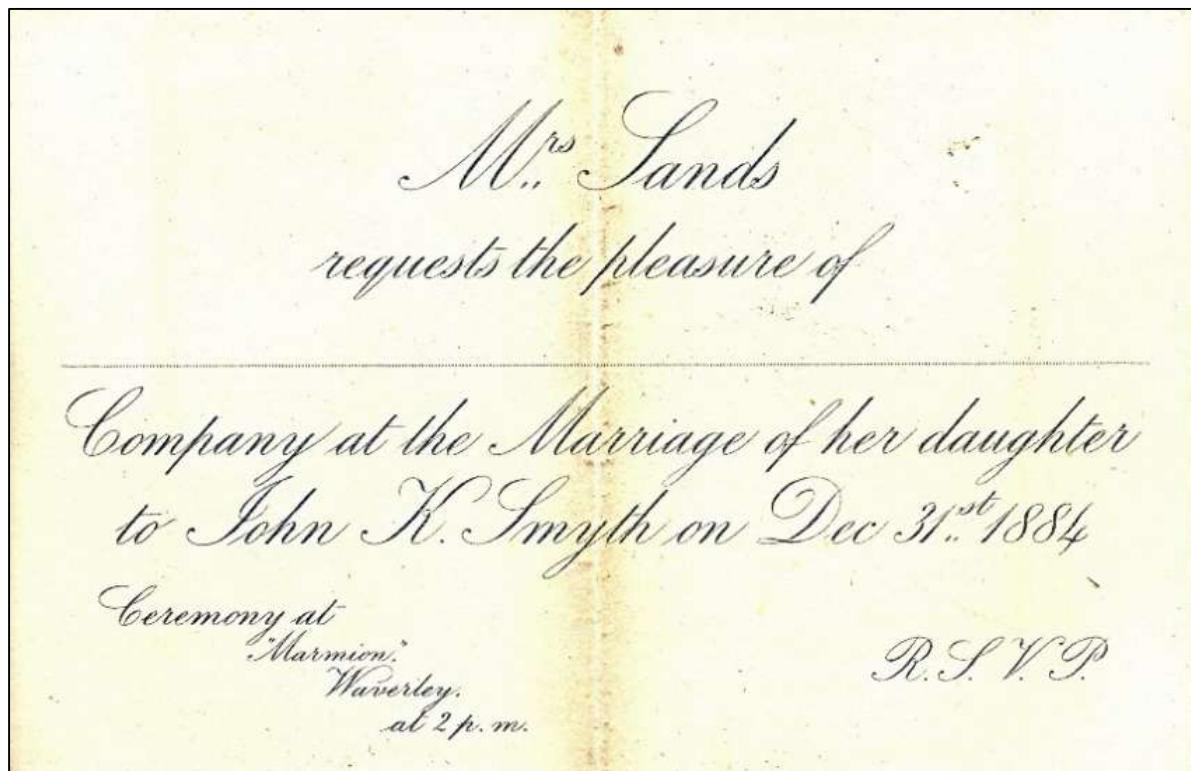
<sup>48</sup> The Book of Common Prayer, and Psalter. John Camden Hotten, Piccadilly, 1866. Fly leaf inscribed *Ada Mary Sands, Sydney 1877*. Family Birth, Death and Marriage dates are recorded therein.

In mid-1884, it appears that Ada Sands and John Smyth had formed an engagement because the trips between Sydney and Melbourne became more frequent for both of them, made easier by the recent connection of the two cities by train. John went to Sydney in mid-November 1884 and stayed there, working from the Sydney office of the Australasian Mortgage and Agency Co. at 348 George St, close to the post office (and to John Sands Ltd). John probably attended the dance held at the *Marmion* ballroom on 21 November and danced with Ada, although he is not mentioned by name on her partly-filled dance card (right).

On 4 December 1884, Ada and John signed a marriage settlement agreement in which John agreed to transfer various mortgaged properties to his Trustees, Sir James McCullough, James McDougall and Alexander McCracken, who would pay Ada the income arising from these property investments during her lifetime<sup>49</sup>.



## Marriage and children



<sup>49</sup> Affidavit of Ada Mary Smyth to the Court of Insolvency, Melbourne, 26 Oct 1896. Public Records Office of Victoria VPRS 761/P0 unit 231, item 90/2633



As the invitation says, John Kane Smyth and Ada Mary Sands were married at Ada's home, *Marmion*, Waverley, on 31 December, 1884. John was 48 and Ada 27 years of age. On New Year's Day 1885, John and Ada Smyth travelled by train back to Melbourne, where they started their married life. Their house, named *Minnesota*, on the northern side of Redan Street, St Kilda, was a nine-roomed brick residence which they rented. Interestingly, their neighbours were Duncan and Catherine McDougall, but I cannot find a connection between them and Dugald McDougall. Two weeks after returning to Melbourne, their mutual friend, Dugald McDougall, died and John was appointed an executor of his will.

John and Ada wasted no time in starting a family. Their first child, John Sands Smyth (known as Jack), was born at home in St Kilda on 15 November 1885. Then followed three daughters: Mary Grant Smyth (my grandmother, named after John's sister Molly) born at St Kilda on 8 March 1887; Marjorie Kane Smyth born at St Kilda on 4 September 1888, and Sybil Rosamund Smyth born at Waverley on 26 May 1890. On the occasion of the birth of each of their first three children, John gave Ada a diamond and gold pendant, made by Fairfax and Roberts, Sydney. These have become Smyth family heirlooms. Four children in four and a half years no doubt kept Ada almost fully occupied, even with the help of servants and a nurse! The family travelled to Sydney at least twice a year by train, nanny in tow, to stay for a few weeks with Marjory at Waverley. By that stage, Marjory was finding it difficult to travel far.



John Smyth's workload continued to grow after his marriage. He became an auditor of the Victorian and the Australian Sheep Breeders' Association<sup>50</sup>, was elected to the council of the Woolgrowers' Association of Australasia<sup>51</sup> and to the committee of the North Western Vermin Board. He was an active member of the Wool Brokers' Association and also maintained his interest in speculative mining ventures. As the U.S. Vice-Consul, he deputised for the Consul-General on many occasions, such as hosting the U.S. Independence Day reception at the Consulate offices in Collins Street<sup>52</sup>. In this capacity, he was required to attend civic functions, balls and Vice-regal receptions. In April 1888, he was appointed Honorary Commissioner for the U.S.A. at the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition<sup>53</sup> and, as an acknowledged wool expert, he advised on the design of the Wool Court at the Exhibition. The exhibition ran for six months from 1 August 1888. John was on the reception committee for the American Baseball Team, which arrived in December 1888.

<sup>50</sup> Leader 28 Aug 1886, p.13

<sup>51</sup> Australian Town and Country Journal 16 Jan 1886, p.22

<sup>52</sup> Argus 5 July 1887, p.3

<sup>53</sup> Argus 27 Apr 1888 p.9

The Australasian Mortgage and Agency Company Limited continued profitably until 1889. John's partnership with Hastings Cunningham ended on 10 July 1888 through effluxion of time (20 years)<sup>54</sup>, but Hastings and John continued as Managing Directors. Unfortunately, throughout its history, some members of the board (including Sir James McCulloch) maintained directorships in competing companies and appeared to favour the competing interests. Hastings Cunningham challenged the Australian board to change their ways or resign, but without success. Frustrated, Hastings resigned his managing directorship in December 1888 and took his fight with the Australian board to the British shareholders<sup>55</sup>.

At about the same time, John suffered a mild cerebral haemorrhage<sup>56</sup>, which affected his mental, but not his physical capacity. John resigned his managing directorship of the Australasian Mortgage and Agency Company Limited, and his position as U.S. Vice-Consul. John, Ada and their three children moved to Sydney to stay with the Sands family at *Marmion* while John convalesced. By March 1889, John had recovered sufficiently to take a holiday back to the U.S.A. and introduce Ada to his relatives. Their three children, aged three, two and six months, remained behind at *Marmion* to be cared for by their grandmother, uncles, aunts and nurse. Before they left Sydney, John made his Will, and the following family photograph was taken – John does not look well.



Sands family, *Marmion*, 1889

Standing L to R: John Sands, John Kane Smyth, Arthur James Sands?, Herbert Guy Sands, Joseph Holdsworth Sands?

<sup>54</sup> The Argus 14 July 1888.

<sup>55</sup> Riverine Grazier 19 July 1889, p.2

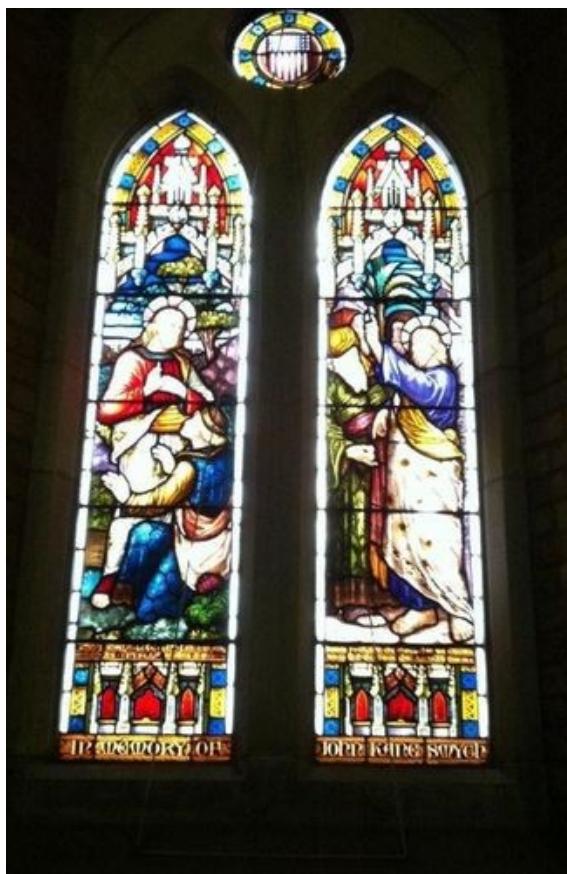
<sup>56</sup> N.S.W. Death Certificate 15547/1891

Seated L to R: Amy Sands (nee Chisholm) with Grant Sands, Ada Mary Smyth (nee Sands) with Marjorie, Mary Grant Smyth, Marjorie Moffat Sands (nee Chisholm), Helen Sands (nee Franks) with Grahame Sands, Robert Sands

Front L to R: Keith Sands, John Sands Smyth, Marjorie Sands, Sydney Sands.

John and Ada sailed on 20 March 1889 from Sydney for San Francisco via Auckland and Honolulu, aboard the R.M.S. *Alameda*.<sup>57</sup> They returned to Sydney on the same ship on 9 February 1890. During their eleven months away, they visited John's many relatives in Minneapolis-St Paul, Minnesota, and Albany, New York, and Ada fell pregnant again. Soon after their return from the U.S., John and Ada travelled to Melbourne once more to tidy up their Victorian affairs, then back to Sydney to await the birth of their daughter Sybil in May.

On 14 April 1891, John Smyth suffered a massive stroke which paralysed and killed him. He had just turned 55, and had been married for only six years. He was buried the next day at the Presbyterian section of the Waverley Cemetery by the Rev. Robert Steel, and a large crowd attended his funeral. In a show of respect, the flags at the various wool stores in the city of Melbourne were flown at half-mast. Some years later, Ada arranged for a commemorative stained-glass window to be placed in John's local church in St Kilda. The ventilation window at the top has the *Stars and Stripes*.



The stained-glass window "In memory of John Kane Smyth" at St George's East St Kilda Uniting Church (formerly St George's Presbyterian Church)

<sup>57</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 21 Mar 1889, p.6

## **Ada's widowhood**

John left his entire estate to his wife Ada, and appointed his brothers-in-law Robert and John Sands as his executors. John declined. For probate purposes, the value of assets was £14,670 and liabilities £20,650<sup>58</sup>, so in theory, the estate was insolvent, but creditors did not call in their loans at that time because Ada offered some of her personal assets (property and shares) and her personal guarantee as security against the loans. It took ten years for Robert Sands to dispose of all the leases and caveats on land titles which John Smyth had accumulated over 37 years.

Marjory Sands, her sister Jane Grahame, and daughter Ada Smyth were dedicated Presbyterians. St Catherine's Clergy Daughters' School for Girls was situated directly across Albion Street from *Marmion* and, when St Catherine's began accepting day pupils from 1895 onwards, Ada sent her daughters there for convenience. To finish their education however, Ada's daughters were all sent as boarders to the Presbyterian Ladies' College at Croydon. Jack went to Sydney Boys' High School at Moore Park – a non-denominational school. From about 1885, there was a Presbyterian Church at Victoria Street, Charing Cross, Waverley, which was about half-way between Jane Grahame's house *Strathearn* on Carrington Street (now Waverley College) and the Sands' home, *Marmion*. This was the focal point for Waverley's Presbyterian families on Sundays. Rev. John Macaulay M.A. was the minister. The following photograph of Ada and her children in their Sunday best was taken in about 1895.

---

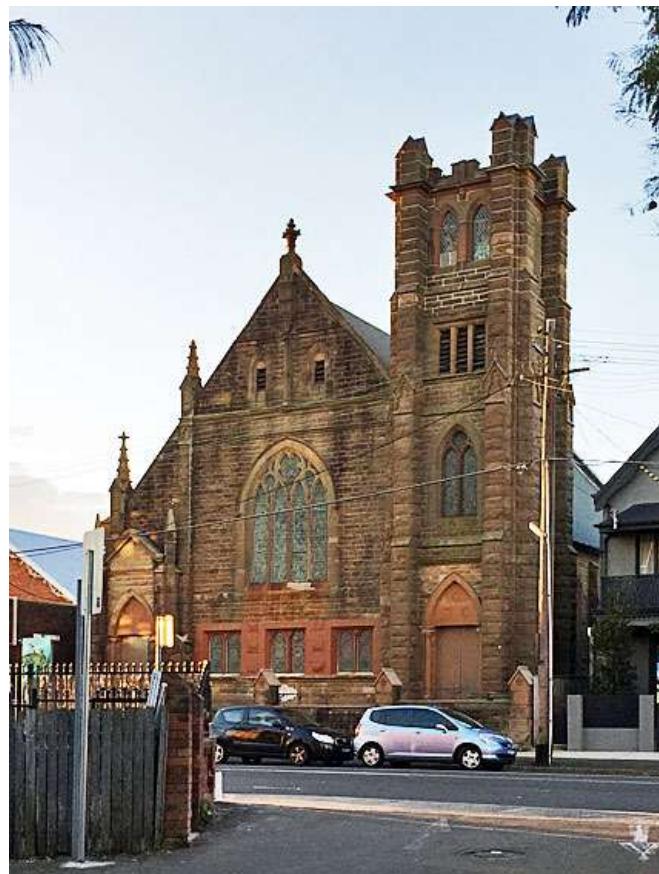
<sup>58</sup> Public Records Office Victoria, Probate and Administration files. VPRS 28/ P0 unit 584, item 46/464; and VPRS 28/ P2 unit 318, item 46/464



The Smyth family, circa 1895.  
Ada Smyth with (clockwise from top) Jack, Mary, Marjorie and Sybil.

Jane's husband, the Hon William Grahame M.L.C., died in 1890. William left Jane a large estate, and they had no children. Ada Smyth and her family saw Aunt Jane Grahame often and would have been influenced by her. Jane started donating her time and money to worthy causes, and the first was a new church building, next to the existing one. With Marjory and

Ada as willing contributors and volunteers, the church ladies started raising funds for the new building by sewing 'fancy needle-work', baking cakes and making sweets, which they sold each quarter at a stall. Ada was the confectionery specialist.<sup>59</sup> Jane was given the honour of laying the foundation stone for the new building. A plaque on the stone is inscribed "*Waverley Presbyterian Church. This stone was laid by Mrs. W. Grahame, Strathearn, Waverley, 8th May, 1897. Rev. J. Macaulay, M.A., Minister.*"<sup>60</sup> The church was opened on 5 February 1898<sup>61</sup>, and Jane donated the front stained-glass window, but the ladies continued to raise funds until 1903 to pay off the remaining debt.



The Grahame Memorial Uniting (formerly Presbyterian) Church,  
Victoria Street, Waverley. 2015.<sup>62</sup>

Australia was hit by a severe economic depression in the 1890s. The values of property and shares in Australia fell dramatically, as did the amount of rental and dividend income from them. Property investment companies made heavy calls for capital from their shareholders, who struggled to pay them. Thirteen Australian banks suspended their operations and called in their loans, including one of Ada's major creditors, the City of Melbourne Bank Limited. On 13 May 1896, Ada voluntarily sequestered her estate in Victoria to the Court of Insolvency when the value of her property and shares no longer covered the value of her outstanding loans<sup>63</sup>, and she could not pay the interest. Liabilities exceeded assets by £8,302. Up until the end of 1894, Ada had received income from insurance policies on John's life, plus income from the investments held in their marriage settlement agreement, but after then, her annual

<sup>59</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 23 Jun 1894, p.10

<sup>60</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 10 May 1897, p.3

<sup>61</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 7 February 1898, p.7.

<sup>62</sup> Photograph by Kurt Ison, May 2015

<sup>63</sup> The Argus 14 May 1896

income from these sources fell to £40 per annum. Ada wrote; “*I have four young children born of my marriage with the said John Kane Smyth to support and on my limited income I should, if it were not for the help rendered to me by me (sic) relatives, find it almost impossible to support such children.*”<sup>64</sup> Ada’s creditors eventually accepted a payment of seven shillings in the pound for settlement of the estate and discharge of the insolvency. The estate’s debts were finally settled on 30 December 1901<sup>65</sup> with a second payment to the creditors, but not before several disputes with the trustee, requiring attendance before the Insolvency Court in Melbourne in August 1900, and filing of a case against a Melbourne property manager to recover rents collected, but not paid to her. Ada had entered her daughter Mary to St Catherine’s Clergy Daughters’ School in Term 1, 1900, and Marjorie and Sybil in Term 1, 1901 but, probably to demonstrate financial hardship associated with the insolvency, Ada took them all out of St Catherine’s for most of 1901. In 1902, Mary was sent to Presbyterian Ladies College as a boarder. Marjorie and Sybil returned to St Catherine’s as day pupils.

Ada’s children were all very bright students and were encouraged by their family and teachers to aspire to a university education. During their high school years, Australia’s involvement in the Boer Wars overshadowed everything. The whole family contributed to the N.S.W. Patriotic Fund to support the war effort<sup>66</sup>. Jack Sands matriculated to Sydney University Faculties of Law, Medicine and Science in March 1903<sup>67</sup> and, with the thought of war never far from his mind, joined the Sydney University Scouts, a precursor to the Sydney University Regiment.

On 16 April 1904, Ada’s mother Marjory Sands died at *Marmion*, aged 72. Her funeral procession to Waverley Cemetery was large. Later that year, Marjory’s husband John Sands’ body was taken from Rookwood Cemetery and re-buried next to Marjory’s at Waverley. Marjory’s estate was valued at £31,115 for probate purposes. Ada inherited *Marmion*, valued in the estate at £4,750<sup>68</sup>. The extra money allowed Ada to withdraw Marjorie and Sybil from St Catherine’s and send them to Presbyterian Ladies’ College Croydon as boarders from Term 2, 1904<sup>69</sup>.



Ada Smyth (left) and her mother Marjory Sands, c1898

Following Marjory’s death, and with her youngest children away at boarding school, Ada began supporting causes associated with women’s and children’s health, possibly because three of her children all showed keen interest in medical studies (or perhaps Ada was the catalyst for

<sup>64</sup> Affidavit of Ada Mary Smyth to the Court of Insolvency, Melbourne, 26 Oct 1896. Public Records Office of Victoria VPRS 761/P0 unit 231, item 90/2633

<sup>65</sup> The Argus 18 Dec 1901

<sup>66</sup> Evening News 18 Nov 1899, p.5

<sup>67</sup> Daily Telegraph 21 Mar 1903, p.12

<sup>68</sup> NSW State Archives. Deceased Estates File 19/10218, Reel 3029

<sup>69</sup> St Catherine’s and P.L.C. Archives

that). In 1905, Ada was supporting the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children and, with her aunt Jane, a Waverley Branch of the District Nursing Association. Marjorie Smyth matriculated to Sydney University in December 1905 and went on to graduate as a Bachelor of Science with Honours in Physiology in 1909. Sybil Smyth was Dux of the Presbyterian Ladies College in 1906, excelling in Physiology, and went on to university the following year. In August 1908, Jack Smyth was appointed Lieutenant (provisionally) in the Sydney University Scouts. He went on to graduate in 1910 as a Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Surgery, completing his residency at the Crown Street Women's Hospital.

Ada's aunt Jane Grahame died on 17 March 1911 at her home, *Strathearn*, Waverley. She left a large estate (probate value £133,457) and, having no children of her own, distributed it to her relatives and friends, and a range of charitable causes. Jane left Ada £5,000 plus a full share (20%) of the residual estate after all other bequests had been distributed<sup>70</sup>. Ada and her family were well set for the future.

Probably through her brother Jack, Mary Smyth met Dr Keith Whiting. The Whitings lived nearby, in Frenchman's Road, Randwick, and Keith was a contemporary of Jack's at Sydney University Faculty of Medicine. The couple were married on 22 November 1911 at the Grahame Memorial Presbyterian Church, Waverley by Rev John Macauley. Mary was given away by her brother Jack, and Marjorie and Sybil were bridesmaids, along with Nellie Crouch<sup>71</sup>. Three months later, Dr Jack Smyth married Nellie Crouch at St Jude's Church, Randwick<sup>72</sup>. Nellie was a Women's Home Nurse and the two probably met when working at the Crown Street Women's Hospital. Marjorie Smyth was one of the bridesmaids.



Amy Jane Whiting (left) and Ada Mary Smyth at their children's wedding, 22 Nov 1911.

With two daughters still unmarried, Ada decided that she would take them on a round-the-world holiday and introduce them to far-flung family, friends and places – a Grand Tour. In

<sup>70</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 25 Jul 1911

<sup>71</sup> Cumberland Argus 25 Nov 1911

<sup>72</sup> Darling Downs Gazette 24 Feb 1912, p.5

February 1912, Ada sold *Marmion* for £3850<sup>73</sup>. On 5 March 1912, Ada held an auction sale of her furniture and effects at *Marmion*<sup>74</sup>, and on the 11 March, Ada (54), Marjorie (23) and Sybil (21) sailed from Sydney aboard the R.M.S. *Zealandia* for Vancouver via Auckland, Suva, Honolulu and Victoria B.C.<sup>75</sup> While they were in transit, Ada's brother, John Sands, was killed in a car accident in Sydney.

Few records exist regarding Ada, Marjorie and Sybil's trip. We know that they arrived in Vancouver on 3 April; visited the Grand Canyon in May; visited Louise Smyth (Mrs Edwin Glenn) in St Paul, Minnesota in August<sup>76</sup>, and Harriette Marie Smyth (Mrs Hiram Lee) in Toronto, Canada later in 1912, before leaving New York for Great Britain and Europe in January 1913.<sup>77</sup>



Marjorie (front) and Sybil Smyth (second) descending the Grand Canyon, 11 May 1912.

<sup>73</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 3 Feb 1912, p.6

<sup>74</sup> Sydney Morning Herald 28 Feb-5 Mar 1912.

<sup>75</sup> Evening News 9 Mar 1912, p.5

<sup>76</sup> Indianapolis Star 4 Aug 1912

<sup>77</sup> Letter from Harriette Lee to Ada Smyth, 6 Feb 1913



(L to R) Sybil, Marjorie and Ada Smyth, Venice, 1913

Over the next ten months, they toured London, Paris, Rome, Switzerland and Venice. They sailed from Naples aboard the S.S. *Orvieto* on 29 November 1913 and arrived in Sydney on News Years Day 1914<sup>78</sup>, completely unaware of the terrible war that was about to engulf and devastate Europe from July 1914 onwards, and how they would be affected by it personally.

On arrival back in Australia, Ada was introduced to her first grandchild. Mary and Keith Whiting gave birth to Terence at Randwick on 12 October 1912, and Mary was pregnant with their second. Ivan Whiting was born on 31 July 1914 at Parramatta, just as Europe was going through the July Crisis. On 1 August 1914, Germany declared war on Russia and, on 4 August, Great Britain declared war on Germany. Australia had already declared its support for Great Britain and had begun preparing for war.

## The War Years

Jack and Nellie produced their first child, Judith Smyth, a month after the Gallipoli landing. The Smyth family threw themselves into supporting the war effort and had numerous goodbye parties for many of their friends as they volunteered for the armed forces. In September 1915, after the battering taken by the ANZACS at Gallipoli, Ada, Marjorie and Sybil Smyth decided

<sup>78</sup> Homeward Mail from India, China and the East. 13 Nov 1913

to volunteer themselves. Marjorie and Sybil joined a Volunteer Aid Detachment as nurses. They arrived in Egypt on 12 October 1915 and started work at the No.1 Australian General Hospital, which was a 1000-bed military hospital established in the Heliopolis Palace Hotel in Cairo, caring for the wounded from the Dardanelles and Gallipoli campaigns. Ada managed to get to Cairo before the Allies placed a ban on non-military travel to Egypt. Ada, along with other lady volunteers, helped set up and run the Empire Soldiers' Club (Heliopolis branch), which occupied a palatial building near the hospital. Other branches were later established at Port Said and Kantara. The club provided 24-hour refreshments, conversation, books, games, musical entertainment and church services every Sunday. Thousands of servicemen visited every week, and Ada would have been kept very busy<sup>79</sup>.



No. 1 Australian General Hospital, Heliopolis Palace, Cairo. 1915<sup>80</sup>

The No.1 Australian General Hospital was transferred to Rouen, France, during April 1916 to service the Western Front, and the Heliopolis branch of the Empire Soldier's Club closed in

<sup>79</sup> Daily Telegraph 10 May 1916, p.6

<sup>80</sup> Australian War Memorial Accession Number P10997.020

June. Sybil and Ada followed the hospital, initially to England, but Marjorie stayed behind in Cairo with the No 1a and 4a Auxiliary Hospitals. There are some stories that Marjorie met and married a soldier during the war - there were many romances between nurses and servicemen at No. 1 A.G.H. Some of Marjorie's poems mourn a lost romance and could only have been written by one who experienced it. Perhaps that is why Marjorie stayed behind in Cairo, but there are no records of a marriage.

Doctors Keith Whiting and Jack Smyth enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps in March and April 1916 respectively. Jack arrived at Plymouth on 26 July 1916 and soon after arriving, he met up with his mother Ada and sister Sybil in London. Keith arrived in England on 29 January 1917 – his third son, Philip Whiting was born while Keith was in transit.



Ada, Capt. Jack and Sybil Smyth, London, 28 July 1916.

Jack, Marjorie and Sybil Smyth, and Keith Whiting all served in France during 1916-1918 and saw the gruesome physical and psychological injuries inflicted upon soldiers at the Western Front. After France, Sybil became a Matron at the Queen Mary's Military Hospital in Whalley, Lancashire. She married Reginald Hore in London on 17 November 1917, a Veterinary Corps Officer with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Light Horse Regiment, whom she had met in Cairo. Ada was back in Australia by March 1917, so did not attend the marriage. All of them survived the Great War.

## Post War

Keith Whiting returned to Australia in April 1919; Reg and Sybil Hore (pregnant), and Marjorie Smyth returned in July 1919 aboard the S.S. *Bremen*; Jack Smyth returned in April 1920. After the war, Jack, Mary and Sybil resumed production of grandchildren for Ada. Jack and Nellie Smyth added Marjorie (1920) and Mary (1922?). Mary and Keith Whiting added two daughters, Rosamund (1920) and my mother, Sybil (1922). Sybil and Reg Hore had four children, Huon (1919), Lois (1921), Adrian (1922) and Julian (1924). In December 1926, all of John and Ada Smyth's children and grandchildren met at the Whiting's holiday house at Palm Beach.



The twelve grandchildren of John and Ada Smyth, Palm Beach N.S.W., Dec 1926.  
L to R: Julian Hore, Adrian Hore, Sybil Whiting, Lois Hore, Mary Smyth, Marjorie Smyth,  
Huon Hore, Ros Whiting, Judith Smyth, Philip Whiting, Ivan Whiting, Terence Whiting.

In January 1919, Ada volunteered as a director of the Crown Street Women's Hospital. This was the start of her long-term commitment to this institution. Ada's time in Egypt would have given her valuable experience for this role. Her directorship required Ada to rub shoulders with some of the elite of Sydney society and their wives – governors, mayors, judges, lawyers, politicians, knights and businessmen. Ada became friends with some of them, in particular the

wife of Justice R.M. Sly. As a director, Ada was involved in decision-making about the hospital's direction and priorities. Occasionally she represented the board at functions, when important visitors inspected the hospital and when making submissions to government for additional funding. But most of Ada's time was spent fundraising for various hospital projects, such as extending the hospital buildings to add more beds and buying an X-Ray machine. Ada was on fundraising committees for balls and dances, bridge and mah-jong parties, fetes and stalls, and art exhibitions.



Ada Mary Smyth

In line with her interest in women's affairs, in the 1920s Ada became a strong supporter of the Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.). Her friend, Mrs R.M. Sly, was the national president at the time. Ada was elected to the National Board of the Y.W.C.A. and represented the board at the National Convention in Brisbane in 1925.<sup>81</sup> Her work for the Y.W.C.A. took her to Melbourne often and, for a few months in 1929 - 1930, Ada became acting president.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Brisbane Courier 29 July 1925, p.18

<sup>82</sup> The Age 22 Oct 1919, p.6



Ada Mary Smyth

At the same time, Ada was supporting the Free Kindergarten Movement and was President of the Committee for the Miller's Point Kindergarten. Ada also did some fundraising for the Eastern Suburbs Ambulance, so she was extremely busy.

Upon returning from Europe after the war, Ada bought a large apartment, 3 *East Court*, 4 Holdsworth Avenue, Elizabeth Bay<sup>83</sup>. Her daughter Marjorie lived with her, but Marjorie decided to go back to Europe and sailed on Christmas Day 1920, accompanied by Lillian Best Sands (widow of Ada's brother, Joseph Holdsworth Sands). Marjorie led the bohemian lifestyle of an artist and poet in Paris for five years, then returned to live with Ada in the Elizabeth Bay apartment until she married in 1935. Marjorie, with her new husband Frederick Burnell, then

---

<sup>83</sup> Sands Sydney Directory 1921

moved to a nearby apartment. Ada saw her daughter Marjorie often, and sometimes Mary, who lived in Parramatta, but Jack and Sybil lived in the country and Ada had to travel to Warwick, Queensland and Grenfell, New South Wales, to visit them, which she did.



Ada Smyth and Marjorie Burnell, Sydney

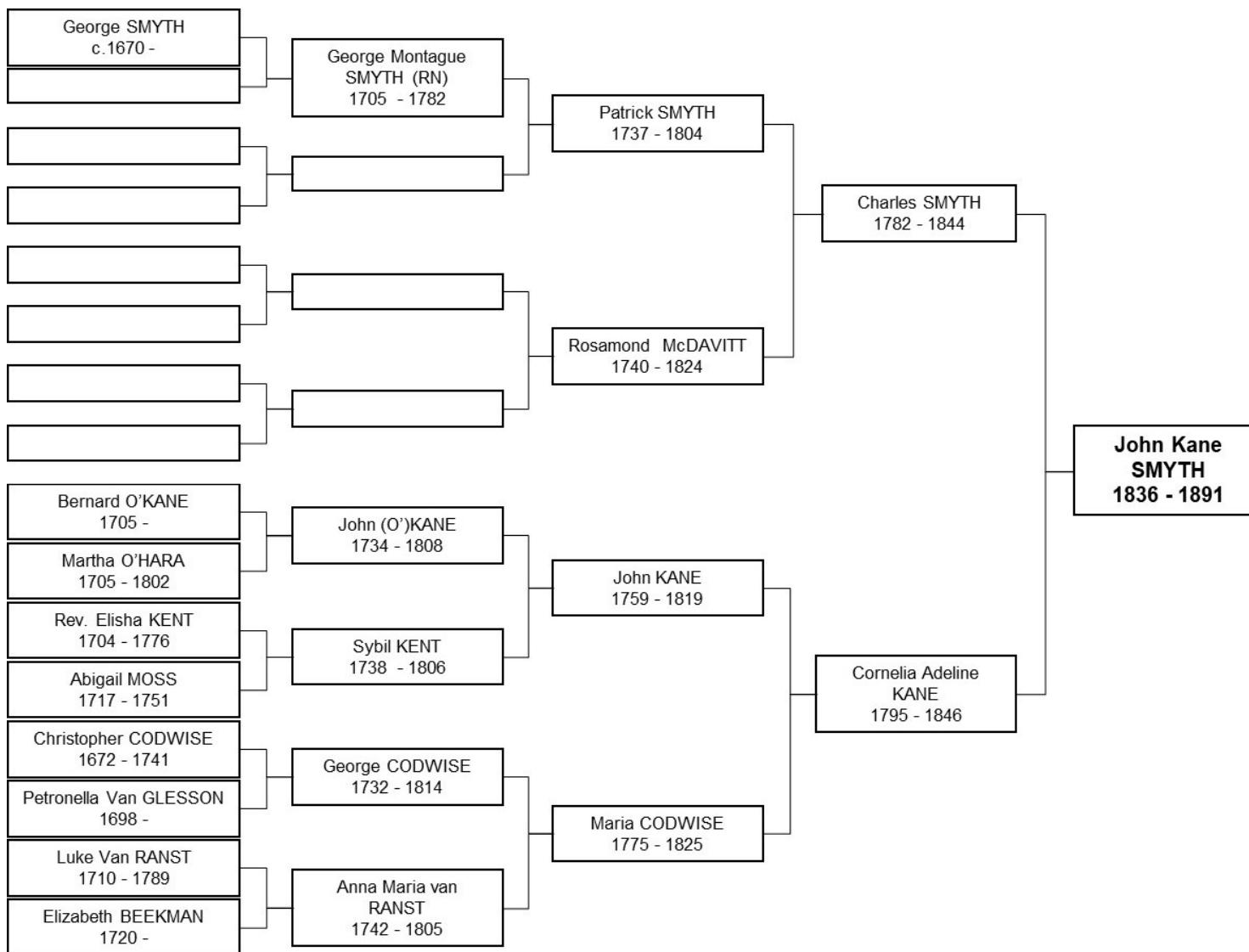
After about 1936, aged 80, Ada started to retire from her busy lifestyle as a volunteer. For thirty years, from the day that her last child completed their education until 1938, Ada had dedicated herself to work tirelessly for the causes that interested her most – young women and children.

In 1943, as Ada grew older and her health deteriorated, she moved to apartment 43 in *Adereham Hall*, a nine-storey, art deco apartment building in Elizabeth Bay Road, which was even closer to Marjorie's place. Ada was also cared for by her daughter-in-law, Nell Sands, and by Sister Ethel Aspinall. Ada died at her apartment in Elizabeth Bay on 11 August 1946, aged 88, of chronic myocarditis and old age. She was buried on 15 August 1946 at the Waverley Cemetery<sup>84</sup>, joining her parents, husband and all of her brothers. She was survived by four children, twelve grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. Her modest estate, valued at £34,400 for probate purposes, was left equally to her children in an investment trust, after making some small bequests to her housekeeper and carers. Ada directed that income from the trust should continue to benefit her grandchildren after the death of her children.

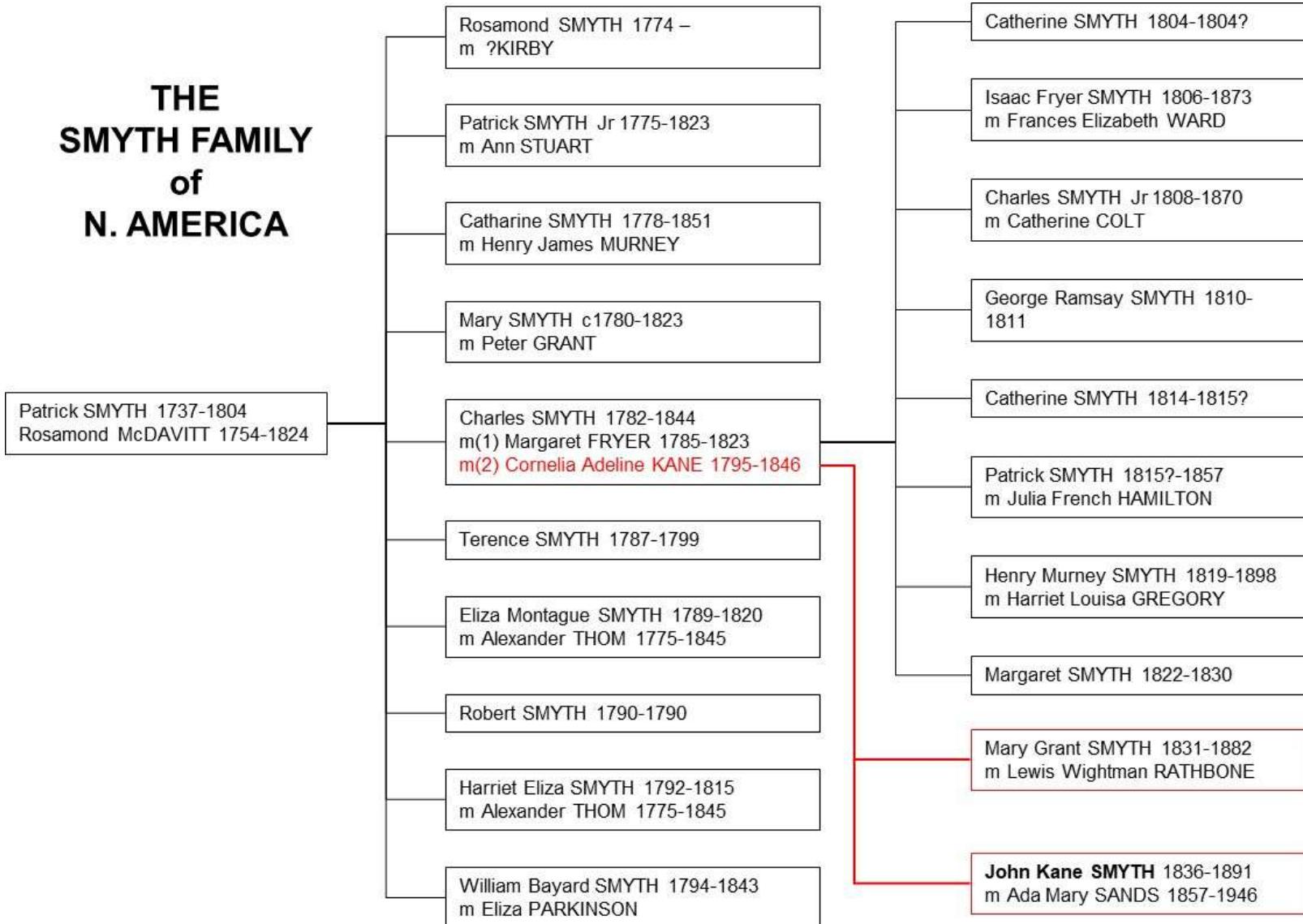
---

<sup>84</sup> NSW Death Certificate 14760/1946

## JOHN KANE SMYTH'S ANCESTORS

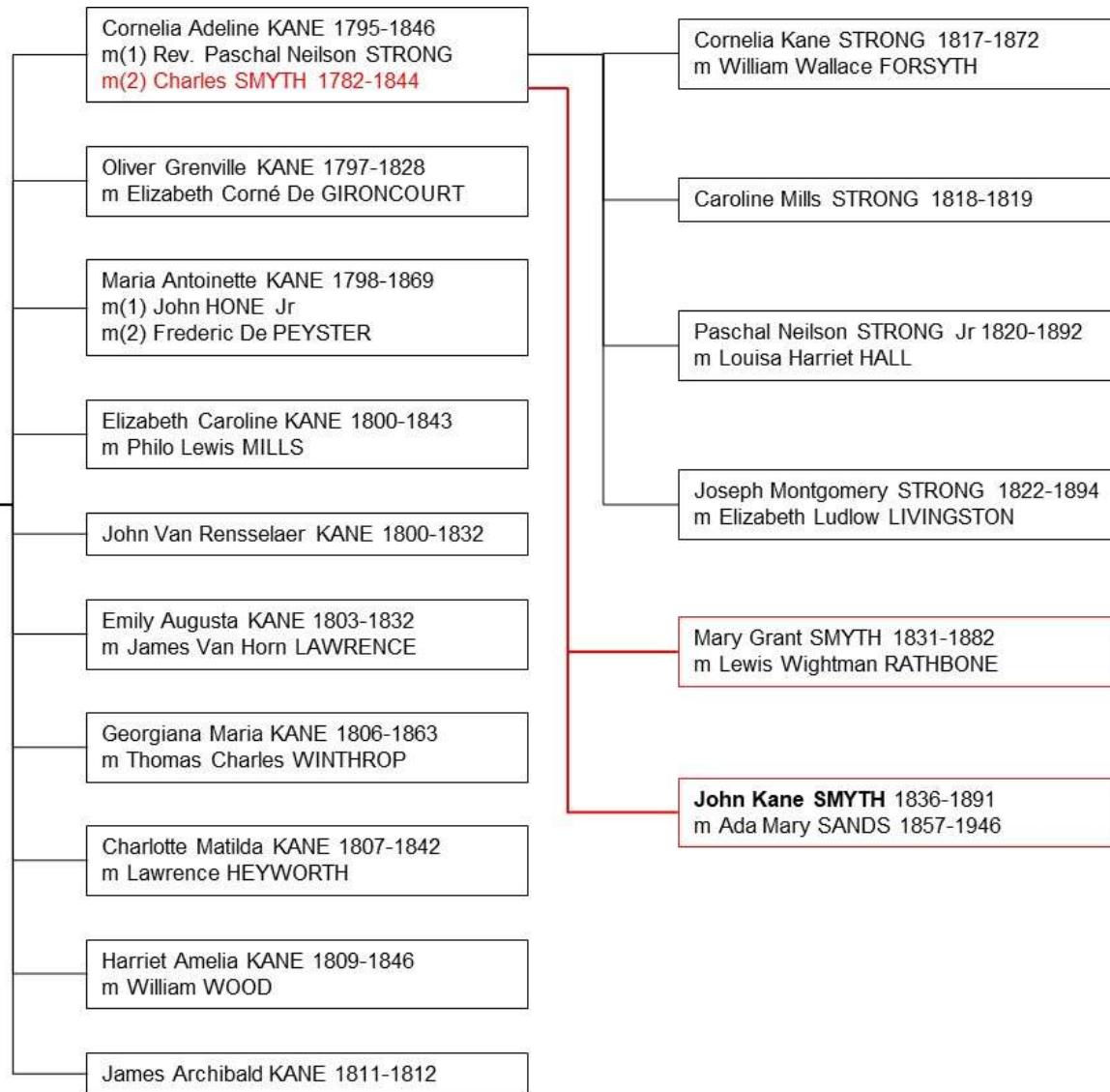


# THE SMYTH FAMILY of N. AMERICA

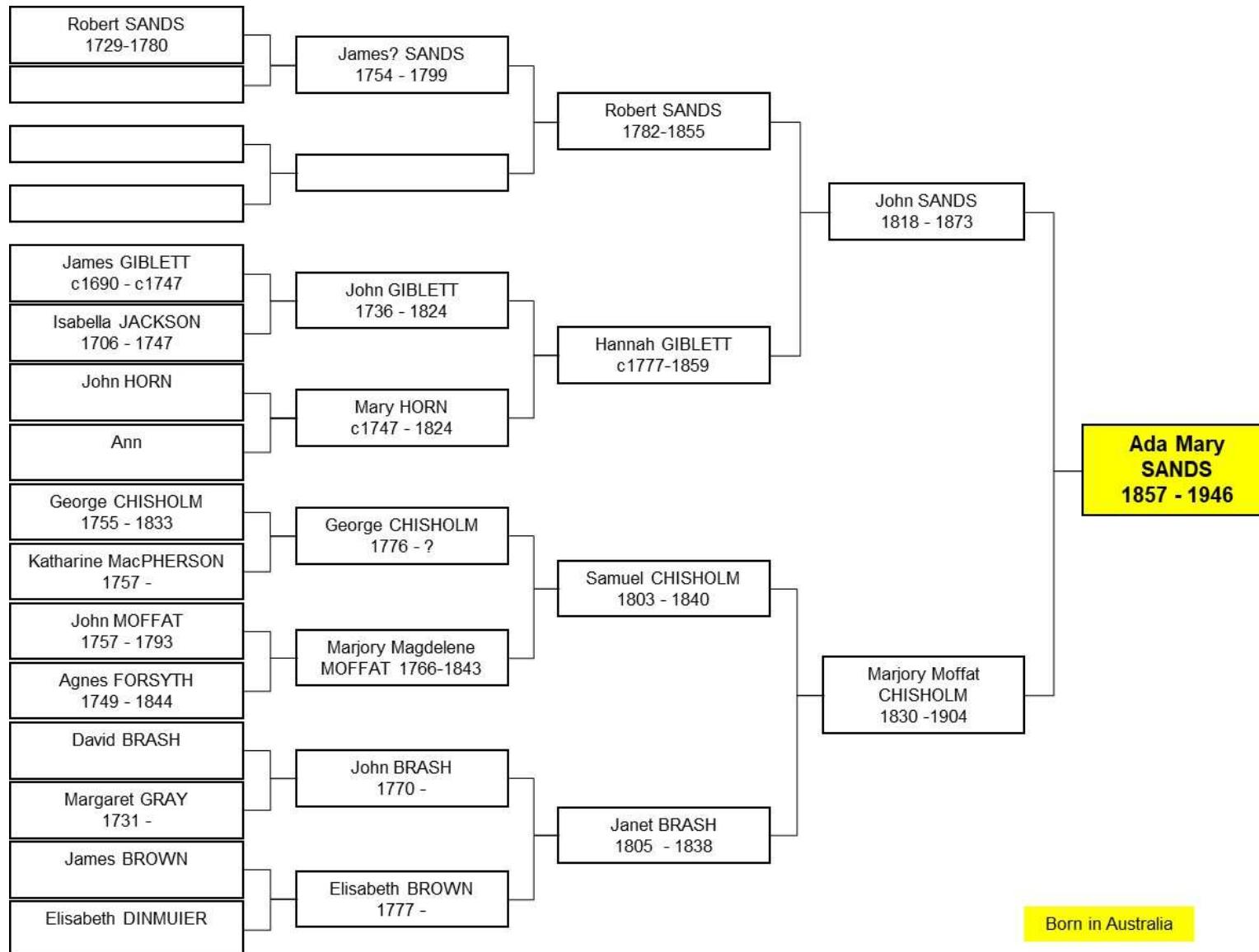


# THE KANE FAMILY of N. AMERICA

John KANE 1759-1819  
Maria CODWISE 1775-1825



## ADA MARY SANDS' ANCESTORS



## JOHN KANE AND ADA MARY SMYTH'S FAMILY

