

OUR DIXON ANCESTORS- George and Amalia (Thimme).

George Dixon was born on 8th August, 1814 in Gateshead, Durham, in the north of England and his birth was followed a year later by that of his brother Charles. Their father, Robert Dixon, was born circa 1790 at St John's, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Northumberland and became a farmer but in 1851 was living in Durham. Robert married Martha Graham born in 1791, on 29th June, 1812 at St John's Newcastle Upon Tyne. In the whole region conditions were bad with massive industrial growth, building, disease with severe cholera epidemics in the 1830's, overcrowding, drunkenness and deprivation so George sometime in the 1840's moved to Ireland to Dublin. He was employed as a servant by Lord Dunnimore at 13 Cuffe Street who lived in a mansion house, and it was here he met Amalia Thimme, also a servant, who had emigrated from Göttingen in Germany. After their marriage in St Peter's United Church of England and Ireland in Dublin on April 9th, 1849, they decided to leave behind the terrible potato famine which was gripping Ireland and emigrate to Australia to start a new life together.

So together with his brother Charles and wife Sarah, George and Amalia embarked on the Mary at Port Cowes on July 6th, 1849. Lord and Lady Dunnimore had given the young couple a parting gift of a flock of sheep and numerous plants to help them on their new venture. On board the Mary were 83 passengers, 53 of whom were Parkhurst Boys who embarked at the Isle of Wight. These were teenagers who were being transported for trivial offences such as stealing bread, handkerchiefs, shoes, rope, books, watches, sovereigns, etc, and were aged in their early to late teens. From the Mary's Logbook it can be ascertained that it had a tonnage of 363, 19 crew, and a cargo of stores including British manufactured goods and wines, and the vessel was only a couple of years old. Although it left Gravesend on June 25th it wasn't until July 6th that it sailed from Plymouth to Australia. It arrived at Fremantle on 24th October, 1849 having taken a total of 111 days or three and a half months which was a long time to be at the mercy of the sea particularly during the winter months when the Roaring Forties were prevalent in the Indian Ocean. Thomas and his wife Sarah also had a daughter Sarah Watson, who had been born in Ireland in 1848 but she died in 1849 at the age of 13 months. They were to have another daughter Elizabeth Rothwell Dixon born in 1851 in Perth but the third child Ellen Dixon born 1853 in Perth died in 1854 at the age of 15 months. Some records spelt Thomas' name as Dickson. Amalia gave birth a year after arrival to their first child and only daughter, Barbara.

When he arrived in WA George Dixon was 35 years old, ten years older than his wife. With a young daughter Barbara only a few months old George wasted no time in settling into colonial life. He purchased Lot 57 Henry Street on 27th March, 1850 for the price of £100 plus interest. Ten years later he qualified as a juror owning £50 of real estate and from 1865-1869 he employed 7 ticket of leave men including two carpenters. George and Amalia were shopkeepers and George used to convey fine wines and spirits to the gentlemen like Sir James Stirling who had a residence on the Harvey River at Cabinup where their third child Robert was born on 22nd July, 1856, whilst George was on a delivery to the Stirlings. He imported the fine wines and spirits from UK and Europe and in a short time had a thriving business.

In 1883 Amalia Dixon had 4 shops built at 85-87 Market Street on the corner, using one as a toy and doll shop, and leasing the other three out. In 1894 she leased the whole four shops to Reen and Headley, Butchers, and in 1898 Holmes Bros took over the lease and supplied fresh meat to the public and acted as wholesalers to the hotels and restaurants in the area. Going from being servants in Ireland to shop and property owners in Fremantle was a big step for the Dixons and probably led to George and his sons' liking of alcoholic beverages. On the 25th June, 1876 at the age of only 62 years George died of liver disease, leaving

Amalia who was aged 52 years to supervise their real estate and their five children. Barbara was aged 26 years having married Frederick Greaves a convict granted a ticket of leave in 1864, in 1866. George the second child was aged 23 years having been born 10th June, 1853 and Robert was 20 years old and the youngest, Godfrey, who had been born on 19th January 1863, was 13 years old so he grew up without having the support of a father. On the 3rd October, 1879, Amalia wrote to the Commissioner of Crown Lands in the hope of acquiring a homestead and about 1,000 acres of land for the purpose of grazing her flock of sheep which were in the area, and of then leasing some of the land. The land was a Police Station at Gornsdyne at a place called Unizin about 40 miles east of York but her request was denied.

From what my great Aunt, Barbara Amelia Dixon born 26th December, 1887, told me it seems that Amalia continued to operate her little toy and doll shop as Barbara had a severe reaction to a small pox vaccination as a toddler and Amalia cared for her in her home at 46 Bellevue Terrace. As a result Barbara became like a marasmus child and spent a year in hospital almost dying from severe malnutrition. So at the age of about two years Amalia became like a second mother to Barbara who lived with her until her death on 26th May, 1901. Barbara told us that they both slept in a big bed together and that she was horrified to wake one morning and find that the old lady had passed away in her sleep during the night. The cause of death was senility and the burial was ordered by the District Coroner Ernest Black. She had been in Western Australia for 51 years and was aged 78 years. So now Barbara at the age of 14 years had to travel to New South Wales to her aunt Barbara Greaves, Amalia's eldest child, who cared for her for a time. When she returned to Fremantle her Aunt Barbara continued to send her little gifts. My great aunt Barbara would recall how Amalia used to give her money to walk to the shop to buy a dozen cream cakes and after telling the child they were no good for her, would consume them all in front of her! Barbara's mother Elizabeth Dixon had one sister, Maria, who had married architect John Mc Neece, and they would often visit their grandmother. It was then up to Barbara to clean up afterwards, washing piles of dirty plates covered with treacle and bread which was also spread on the table and all over the floor. Unlike her siblings which were tutored from home by a governess, Barbara had to attend school and when she came home Amalia would give her a raw parsnip to eat.

But she recalled that Amalia was also kind and one day gave her a doll from her little shop which Barbara treasured. The doll had fallen down while Barbara was trying to get it down, hitting Amalia under the eye but her grandmother quickly forgave her. Amalia was referred to as the "fat granny" as she had to sit on two chairs being very well endowed, probably due to her love of those cream cakes!

Amalia and George Dixon are on panel 96 on the Welcome Walls WA Museum at Fremantle and Amalia appears on a plaque in the Pioneer Women's garden in King's Park in Perth WA. She is remembered as a pioneer in the Fremantle area, a successful shopkeeper and the mother of five children who were also to leave their mark on the WA State in one way or another-Barbara, born 1850, George born 1853, Robert born 1856, Charles born 1859 and Godfrey, my great grandfather, born 1863.

My Great aunt Barbara came to live with my grandmother Ivy Maud Hettner after her third child John David was born on 18th April, 1928 and she stayed there at the farm at Cherry Tree Pool, caring for the second child Doreen as Ivy was busy with the baby. Doreen regarded her as a mother and she slept with her in the bed in the little mud brick cottage and Barb attended to her every need, being kind and gentle and never raising her voice. When Doreen married in 1951 and started her own family Barb went to live with her at New Farm not far from Fair Monte, remaining there until her death on 6th December, 1962 at the age of 74 years. She suffered a heart attack precipitated by undiagnosed Diabetes which had also

later afflicted her sister Ivy, and previously afflicted Irene another sister but she had the Type 1 Juvenile Diabetes whereas Ivy and Barb had Type 2 or Mature Onset Diabetes. Both Barbara and Ivy craved sweets and Ivy was fond of eating sweetened condensed milk out of the tin by the spoonful, as well as having a drawer of lollies and biscuits in her bedroom. Unfortunately diabetes has very severe side effects including heart and kidney disease and in those days diagnosis was very slow and the disease had usually progressed for too long before medical intervention could help. Ivy's daughter Betty and son John also developed mature onset diabetes in later life so there does seem to be a genetic factor somehow involved.

AMALIA THIMME— was born in Gottingen on 29th October, 1824. Some information about the family from the Lutheran Church at Gottingen is seen below

EXTRACT OUT BOOKS OF LUTHERAN CHURCH GOTTINGEN

BIRTH:

YEAR OF SAINT ALBANI 1821 PAGE 318 NR 44
THIMME CARL CHRISTOPH 20.9.1821
FATHER: GOTTFRIED THIMME (WATCHMAKER)
WIFE: ANNA BARBARA OPFERMANN

DEATH:

YEAR OF SAINT ALBANI 1850 PAGE 7
GOTTFRIED THIMME DIED - HIS WIFE ANNA BARBARA OPFERMANN
HIS AGE 77 YEARS (BORN 1773)

FROM CITY ARCHIVES - WORK COMPILED BY CHURCH:

THIMME GOTTFRIED PROTESTANT BORN IN HOHNSTEIN/OSTPREUBEN
(EAST PRUSSIA)
ANNA BARBARA THIMME WIFE CATHOLIC BORN IN HEILIGENSTADT
1817 GOTTFRIED THIMME RECEIVED FREEDOM OF THE CITY IN
GOTTINGEN

PREVIOUSLY LIVED IN HEILIGENSTADT

THE WEDDING PROBABLY TOOK PLACE IN HEILIGENSTADT

THE FOLLOWING OTHER CHILDREN WERE BORN:

1812 REGINA THIMME
1813 ANNA THIMME
1815 JULIA THIMME
1818 LOTTE THIMME
1820 BERTA THIMME
1821 CARL THIMME
1822 AMALIA THIMME

AS THE MOTHER WAS CATHOLIC THE DAUGHTERS WERE PROBABLY
CHRISTENED CATHOLICS

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON OPFERMANN FAMILY WRITE TO:

PFARRAMT, 8551 HEILIGENSTADT OBERFR AND
KIRCHENBUCHARCHIV BEIM BISCHOFLICHEN GENERALVIKARIAT
DOMHOF 15, 3200 HILDESHEIM