

The Le Roy Family

*This information has been compiled from a multitude of sources by Margaret Peacocke, a great-great-grand-daughter of Edward & Annie Paddison. **COPYRIGHT** 2007 in its entirety.*

It is not known why Emilius, the eldest son of the founder of E. Le Roy Ltd chose farming rather than following his father's footsteps into the business world as his two younger brothers Albert and Edward did. Whatever the reason, he chose to make a life for himself and his family on Great Barrier Island.

He arrived with his new bride Sarah Jane (nee Cooper) whom he married in July 1879. Before their house was built, they lived in a nikau whare on their piece of land in Rarohara Bay, Port FitzRoy to the west of 'Peach Tree Creek'. (William Cooper (*Sarah Jane Le Roy's uncle*) purchased the block of land bordering the Le Roys to the east of Peach Tree Creek at Rarohara Bay).

When Emilius became Postmaster in 1884, the mail arrived from Auckland by boat, usually a steamer, which dropped anchor below the house. The mail would then be transported ashore and carried to the Post Office. A fairly tall post with an enclosed box at its foot was erected on the top of the peninsular (between Rarohara and Kaiaraara bays) at a spot called 'Mill View'. (Apparently a windmill had been built on this hill prior to the Le Roys' arrival and was dismantled in about 1881. I have been unable to ascertain who built it). Telegrams, or any other important information, would be put in this box and a signal hoisted on the post – usually a red bandana. The signal could be seen from many vantage points around FitzRoy. Once the schoolroom was built on the property, the mail was usually given to the children to take home.

Emilius held the position of Postmaster for 40 years until 1923 when Joseph Paddison took over the role. Joe's property was more convenient once the wharf was built at Port FitzRoy. Steam ships could easily tie up at the new wharf (built in 1916 at a cost of £400 some years after residents sent a petition to Government) and the locals could get to the Post Office adjacent to 'Glenfern' either by horse or boat.

In 1893 Emilius received a grant of £10 "to be paid to Mr Le Roy on completion of building [schoolroom] to accommodate Mr Warren's children and his own". On its completion, his five school age children were able to, once again, have the services of a teacher to assist with their education, although still not on a fulltime basis as the teacher had other families to educate. The school, attached to the store and Post Office, continued to operate out of the Le Roys' schoolroom until 1927 (by this time, all the Le Roy children had grown up) when a church hall was built next to the Port FitzRoy wharf. The land was donated by the Warrens (originally William Cooper's land) and local people brought materials and built it (at no cost). It has been described as a nice building but the ceiling was unlined so it was cold in winter. It doubled as a schoolroom.

In 1941, the last pupil was enrolled at Great Barrier School. In the school's register it was number 230, Joseph Paddison Cooper, born 19 August 1935. He was the grandson of Joseph Paddison (enrolled as number 6) and Samuel Cooper (number 7). The army took over the hall, as its presence on Great Barrier intensified with fears of a Japanese invasion of Auckland during WW2. The school never re-opened.

In 1901, tragedy struck the family when their eldest son, Emilius was drowned (one story suggests that he was wearing new gumboots and wouldn't take them off knowing that his father would be cross if he lost them!!) at the age of 21 after his yacht capsized as he was sailing near Flax Island, between Rarohara Bay and the "big passage" (Man o War Passage) practically within sight of his home. His companion swam ashore.

Tragedy struck again in 1902 when their house burned down. However, this time, tragedy turned into a good news story despite the economic setback, because everyone got out safely and the pigeon post service was used immediately after the fire to send an order to Auckland for the necessary timber and

joinery to build a new house. These arrived on the next boat. Settlers from all over the island came in boats, pitched tents and worked solidly. They achieved the near impossible - a new single-storied house with verandahs around two sides was erected in just one week.

A photograph taken prior to the original house being burned down in 1904, shows a building partly on the beach that was used to store tent poles. At high tide, they were "loaded onto a large punt to be shipped from the anchored steamer to Auckland for his father's tent and cover and coat shops." Another small building in the photo is said to be a "drying shed where oilskin coats were hung to dry after being dressed with a water-proofing mixture." (Cyril Moor "Early Settlement of Port FitzRoy, Great Barrier Island"). So, it would appear that Emilius did have some involvement in the family business.

Even into the twentieth century, the island was remote. In 1908 when Emilius' daughter Ada was marrying Joss Moor there was no Minister on the island, so one had to come by steamer from Auckland. For some reason, he didn't arrive. The only person on the island authorised to perform a marriage was the Postmaster, so Emilius officiated at his daughter's wedding.

When Emilius died in 1944, his son Selwyn carried on the farm with the youngest of the eleven children, Girlie, until his death in 1962. Girlie continued to eke out a living by milking a few cows and selling part of her land. Her death in 1979 completed 100 years of unbroken occupancy by the Le Roy family on this site.

Many members of the Le Roy, Flinn and Bush pioneer families are buried on the uninhabited Grave Island in FitzRoy Harbour. This island is marked on the charts as Coigne or Quoine Island.

Of the Le Roys, the following were buried there;

Emilius George Le Roy, Sarah Jane Le Roy, (Elizabeth) May Waterman (nee Le Roy), Albert Waterman (May's husband), Vera Le Roy, Selwyn Joseph Le Roy, Emilius Le Roy (jnr)

Edward Le Roy also had a relationship with Great Barrier. He spent his honeymoon (I'm not sure whether this was the honeymoon of his first marriage in 1896 or his second in 1910) at Great Barrier and obtained 29 acres from his brother, Emilius. He built a cottage on the land using workers from the family business when they were not busy. A postcard from 1910 shows it, but anecdotal evidence indicates that it had not been completed by 1917.

The Great Barrier Island by A. E. Le Roy

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Emilius George Le Roy's Family

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| Father: Emilius James Le Roy Born: 1827 in Guernsey Died: 1905 in Auckland Buried: Purewa Cemetery, Auckland | Mother: Catherine (nee Tabel) Born: 1827 in Guernsey Died: 1904 Buried: Purewa Cemetery, Auckland |
| Children: | |
| Emilius Le Roy Born: 1880 Died: drowned in 1901 Buried: Grave Island, Great Barrier | (Elizabeth) May Le Roy Born: 1881, Died: 1963 Married: Albert Waterman Buried: Grave Island, Great Barrier |
| Daisy Catherine Le Roy Born: 1883 Died: 1950 Married: Mr Mitchell | Elsie Annie Le Roy Born: 1885 Died: 1926 Married: never married |

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| Vera Tabel Le Roy Born: 1886 Died: lived only 10 days Buried: Grave Island, Great Barrier | Ada Marie Le Roy Born: 1888, Died: 1973 Married: Mr Joss Moor Buried: Le Roy's Point |
| Amy Alice Le Roy Born: 1889 Died: 1976 Married: Mr Bone | Selwyn Joseph Le Roy Born: 1891, Died: 1962 Married: never married Buried: at Grave Island |
| Olive Winifred Le Roy Born: 1894 Died: 1963 Married: Mr Wilson | Dorothy Ruth Le Roy Born: 1899 Died: 1950 Married: Mr O'Meara |

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| Emilius George married 1911 to | Elizabeth Craig (died 1916) |
| Child: | |
| Agnes (Girlie) Dalziel Le Roy | |
| Born: 1912, Died: 1979, Buried: Le Roy Point | |
| Never Married: | |



Girlie Le Roy 1912-1979

Agnes Dalziel Le Roy was known as Girlie. Only child of the 3rd Mrs Le Roy (Elizabeth) and Emilius Le Roy.

Girlie lived her earlier life in Auckland with her Uncle Edward Le Roy, coming back to Great Barrier at the age of 20 to look after her father Emilius and later her step brother Selwyn Le Roy. Selwyn is buried on Grave Island with other members of the Le Roy family.

Girlie was a very private person who worked from sunrise to sundown. She loved dancing and would go anywhere on the island to attend a dance. She could walk or row a boat anywhere and in summer her daily exercise was to swim to Grave Island and back. She loved picnics and tennis, knitting and sewing.

Girlie was secretary of the Women's Division and did a term on the Great Barrier Council.

She had a much loved horse called Barney but her cows were her livelihood and she preferred Jersey cows and wouldn't allow anyone else to milk them. One night she went to feed her calves after milking and she had a brain haemorrhage and died.

Girlie is buried along with her half sister, Ada Marie Moor (1888-1973), daughter of Emilius and Sarah Jane Le Roy, on what was once Le Roy property at Kaiaraara Bay Road. Girlie's death ended 100 years of Le Roy settlement on this land.