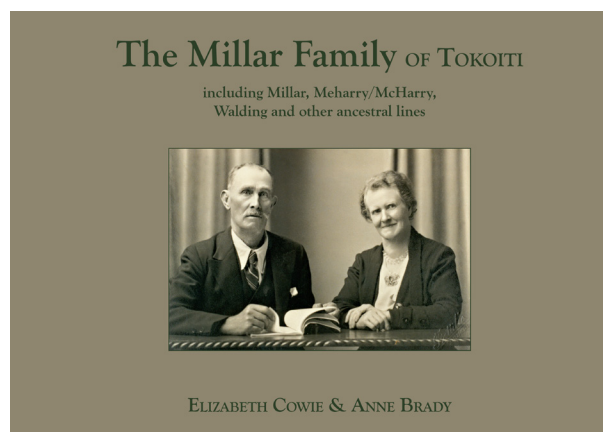


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William Millar formerly Meharry/ McHarry and Ellen Frances Walding

William John Meharry was born 24 February 1871 at Woodend, Victoria, Australia. He was the eldest son of William Meharry and Anne Goodisson, and he had five siblings. More detail on William's parents and siblings is found in the chapter on the Meharry/McHarry family (see p. 79).

The first official document where we find William John as an adult is the 1903 Victoria electoral roll at Korumburra, in the Flinders area, where he is a contractor. Korumburra is 75 miles (121 kilometres) south-east of Melbourne. Ellen Frances Walding, his wife-to-be, was on the same electoral roll, also at Korumburra. This was the same year that Ellen had her first son, William Henry Walding. Because of the given name William, and the fact that they were living in the same place, we believe that William John Meharry was almost definitely his father. It is known that Ellen worked as a domestic for Mrs Anne Wilson, formerly Meharry, William John's mother, who by this time was living close by in Kardella.

Two years earlier, in 1901, Ellen had a child, Florence, who was possibly not a child of William John. No father was named on her birth certificate.

Ellen Frances Walding was born on 23 August 1883 at 5 Princes Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne. Her parents were Thomas Walding and Rebecca née Smith, and both were born and died in Melbourne. Helen, as we refer to her as throughout our narrative, was the oldest of eleven; however, only seven, including her, reached adulthood. Helen's family is detailed later, in the chapter on the Walding family (see p. 63).



William Millar, formerly Meharry, in Victoria, Australia, c. 1898

What work did our couple do?

Our oldest photo of William, taken around 1898, shows him "on the boards" hand-felling a eucalyptus tree. The location is not recorded so it could be in the Woodend or Korumburra areas. This photo tells us he was involved with timber milling and related occupations.



Ellen Frances Walding (Helen Millar), aged 8, with her grandmother Elizabeth Ann Luscombe, formerly Smith, née Russ, in Victoria, Australia, c. 1891

Helen, as mentioned, was a domestic for William's mother. That begs the question: "How did Ellen, born and raised in inner-city Melbourne, end up in Woodend?" Our best guess is that the grandmother, Elizabeth Russ (1841-1900), whom she is photographed with, lived in Ballan. Mrs Goodisson senior (1831-1905) lived close by in the Trentham area and was the mother of Helen's employer, Anne Meharry. This connection may have been the link to her employment.

Around 1905, William and Helen Millar and their children, Florence and William Henry, moved to New Zealand. This may have been triggered by seeing the following notice in the Melbourne paper the previous year:

The Age (Melbourne, Vic.) Tuesday 8 March 1904, p. 5:

Immigration to New Zealand. Wellington, Monday.

The premier states that under the old agreement with the shipping lines farm laborers paid from £25 to £30 passage money to New Zealand, and were required to land with £50. They now paid £10, were required to have only £25, and the Government paid £4 to £6. Mr. Seddon expects another 100 men shortly, and knows that they will be absorbed. The Government requires 100 men for railway casual work at 7/- a day and cannot get them.

At the time the family emigrated, William John Meharry changed his name to William Millar. By this time most of his family had changed to the McHarry spelling, although we were unable to find William on a document as McHarry.

It is not known why he chose Millar. Was it because of his profession as a sawmiller, perhaps coupled with the similarity to the Meharry name?

Various family stories are given as to the reason they left Australia, one being that William was in a fight and was scared he may have killed the man. It appears that he had not killed anyone, and the name change was common knowledge among the family.

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