

Research on Rosenia “Maude” WEBBER 1875 - 1927

I can't remember when Aunty Jan Byrne nee Apps, introduced me to my great grandmother Rosina. I remember seeing this beautiful lady in a large oval frame hanging on the wall when I was introduced to her. “That's Rosina, my mothers' mother”, said Aunty Jan. I fell in love with her there and then. Fortunately, for me, and thanks to my father, I am now a recipient of the same portrait that hangs proudly in my workroom. These portraits were taken in 1926, the year before she died. Six portraits were produced, one each for her daughters. I received the one that was given to Aunty Edna, her youngest daughter as she didn't have any children to hand it down.

Such a beautiful name.....Rosina! But that is not what she was known as. She was known as Maud. Sometimes spelled Maude. On her headstone, she is known as R. Maude Matthews. Whilst I have been reviewing old documents within my research material I have also realised that I have been incorrectly spelling her name. Her marriage certificate, will and house deeds all note the spelling as Rosenia. But like so many of my family members, including my mother, she was known by her middle name. Like my mother, she didn't like it either as her headstone indicates.

On 16th February 1876, Rosenia was just 11 days from her first birthday when she and her family arrived at Sydney Cove on board the “Earl Dalhousie”.¹ On arrival, her mother, Harriet was very pregnant. She gave birth² just two months after the family's arrival in the Colony of NSW. The newborn daughter was named Harriet Ann. A fortnight after the birth Rosenia's mother contracted Typhoid Fever and passed ³away leaving behind five infants aged between 8 years and two weeks old; Frederick William, aged 7, John aged 5, Joseph aged 3, Rosenia herself aged 15 months and Harriet Ann, 16 days old. It is not certain if Rosenia's father was around at the time of her mother's death. According to her death certificate, the informant was a friend Henry Saxelby of Cross Street, Balmain. The witnesses to the burial, that took place at Balmain Cemetery, were Henry Saxelby and John Webber. Henry Saxelby and his wife and three young children came to the Colony of New South Wales on board the “Earl Dalhousie” with the Webbers. His occupation was a ‘furnace man’, having much in common with John Webber, the tin smelter.

¹ NSWSA: NSW Gov't. Inward passenger lists. Series 13278, Reels 399-560, 2001-2122, 2751. Series 1291, Reels 1263-1285, 2851

² NSW BDM: 1876/1486

³ NSW BDM: 1876/1112

Research on Rosenia “Maude” WEBBER 1875 - 1927

Rosenia’s mother and sister were both buried in Balmain Cemetery. This is no longer a cemetery but a park. The cemetery operated from 1868 to 1912. All the headstones were pulled down and recycled to erect a retaining wall around the boundary of the park and are now known as the Pioneer Memorial Park. There is a website that has been created to memorialise all who were laid to rest in the original cemetery. Both Harriet’s deaths are recorded in the register. You can find more information here <https://balmaincemetery.org>

Rosenia’s Uncle William Webber and family arrived in the Colony of NSW in September 1877 onboard “Star of the West” from New York USA.

There is evidence that her father and Uncle, William Webber, leased property called The Hobart Town Tin Smelting Company Limited in Hobart in April 1877.⁴ Therefore, from this information, it is thought that Rosina and her siblings accompanied their father to the Colony of Tasmania.

There is a silence of information between 1880 and 1885 about the family. It is possible that Rosenia and her siblings were raised with their cousins. Although, her Uncle William did not have a life of ease. He arrived in the Colony with his first wife, Harriet Margaret and firstborn child, Clara Jane in 1877. By June 1878 his second child, Harriet Bertha was born in Tasmania. Sadly, his wife died thirteen days after Harriet was born. This sounds like ‘Deja Vu. He married again in April 1881 to Margaret Bernard. No children of this marriage have been found. Margaret Webber died a few years later in August 1884. He again married just a few months after Rosenia’s father married Elizabeth Clark in 1885.

The first of Rosenia’s half-siblings was born in January 1886 at Hobart⁵.

Sometime in 1887 when Rosenia was 12 years old, the family migrated to Sydney.

Her second half-sibling, Ronald was born in December 1887⁶ at Waterloo. Next followed Leila in March 1890⁷, born Sydney then Flora came along in January 1892, born Waterloo.

When Rosenia was 16 years old her father was appointed as foreman smelter at Mount Malvern Silver Mines in South Australia. He was due to arrive in Adelaide on board ‘SS

⁴ TAHO: Series SC323 Returns of Companies Registered Under the Companies Act 1869, Item Number, SC323/1/23, Company No. 41

⁵ TAHO BDM: 1886 Rego 547; RGD 33

⁶ NSW BDM 1888/12061

⁷ NSW BDM 1890/1143

Research on Rosenia “Maude” WEBBER 1875 - 1927

Adelaide’ in July 1892. Her stepmother and half-siblings probably went with him. Rosenia would now have been employed and independent as would have been her three brothers, Frederick, John and Joseph aka Harry, therefore, making their own life in Sydney.

At the age of 18, Rosenia found herself pregnant and on 1 August 1893 she had a baby daughter. According to the NSW BDM records the baby was registered as Harriett Webber, no father was registered and Rosenia named herself Maud on the birth registration,⁸ registered at Redfern, Harriet was known as Dolly. When Dolly married John Sigel⁹ at St Stephen’s Church, Newtown, Sydney on 4th May 1912¹⁰ she gave her name as Harriet Dorothy Mary Sergant (sic) Webber. Perhaps this is an indication of her fathers’ identification.

Her parents are stated as Rosina Maude Matthews but no father. Therefore Dolly must have known that Edward Matthews, Rosenia’s husband, was not her father.

Rosenia’s stepmother presented with another daughter, Amy Mavis, on 7 May 1898¹¹ at Broken Hill, NSW. Perhaps her father was working at a mine in this area. I have not found any information regarding the Webbers in Broken Hill. By 1899 her father had moved his family to Port Pirie, S. A.

On 27 April 1901, Rosenia Maud Webber married Edward Matthews at St Barnaba’s Church, Broadway. Over the following decade, Edward and Maud went on to have five girls.

Frederick William Webber, Rosenia’s eldest brother, married Rebecca Maclean in 1896 ¹² in Sydney, NSW. They had a son, John Frederick, in 1898. He tragically died on 4 May 1900. *“The inquest stated I find that the said John Webber at Prince Alfred Hospital Camperdown in the District of Sydney in the Colony of New South Wales on the 4th day of May 1900 died from the effects of scalds accidentally received on the 3rd day of the said*

⁸ NSW BDM 1893/31241

⁹ NSW BDM 1912/6761

¹⁰ NSW BDM 1912/6761

¹¹ NSW BDM 1898/19693

¹² NSW BDM 1896/2222

Research on Rosenia “Maude” WEBBER 1875 - 1927

month at his parents' residence 12 St Mary Street Newtown in the District and Colony aforesaid. Through falling into and upsetting a vessel containing scalding water.”

They had no other children and his wife passed away in 1913. Frederick remarried a widow Edith Newman nee Calcraft in 1915. There were no children in this union. Fred died in 1945 and is interred with Rosenia at Botany Cemetery.

Rosenia's brother, John married Violet Rebecca Hughes in 1904. They had three children, Henry Charles born in 1906, Eva born in 1909 and John born in 1910. John died in 1940 and he too is interred with Rosenia.

Her youngest brother, Joseph Henry aka Harry, married Nellie Vashti Jardine in 1908 at Manly. They had three girls: Ethel Agnes born in 1909, Nellie born in 1913 and Muriel Mary born in 1915. He died in 1960. He was cremated at Botany Cemetery. His ashes were taken.

Rosenia was a seamstress, making clothes for the family and others. It is possible that she earned her own income through this trade enabling her to purchase a property at Government Road, Mascot, known as “Claremont”. The deeds show that the mortgage was in Rosenia's name noting ‘wife of Edward Matthews’. This gives an indication of a very independent woman.

It is here that Rosenia and Edward raised their daughters. Although Dolly was not the biological child of Edward he regarded her as his own. Dolly married just prior to her mother purchasing this property.

Before purchasing this property and whilst I was researching the birthplaces of their children they lived in various abodes.

1893 Walker Street, Redfern	Harriet Dorothy “Dolly” Webber born.
1901 Trafalgar Street, Annandale	Annie Margaret Matthews born.
1904 Piper Street, Leichhardt	Ethel Rose Matthews born.
1906 Piper Street, Leichhardt	Address as per Sand's Directories.
1908 Hegarty Street, Glebe	Gladys Matthews born.

Research on Rosenia “Maude” WEBBER 1875 - 1927

According to the deeds of Lot 31; Section 3; Government Road, Mascot, Rosenia Maude Matthews took out a mortgage with Equitable Permanent Benefit Building Land and Savings Institution to purchase “Claremont”.

The Certificate of Title states:

Register Book Vol 2277 Folio 100 App No. 5951 Reference to last Certificate Vol. 2150 Folio 250

Rosenia Maude Matthews wife of Edward Matthews of Mascot, Trolley Driver, Transferee under Instrument of Transfer from George Brothie No. 668092 is now the proprietor of an Estate in Fee Simple, subject, nevertheless to the reservations and conditions, if any, contained in the Grant hereafter referred to, and also subject to such encumbrances, liens and interests as are notified hereon, in that piece of land situated at North Botany in the Municipality of Mascot, Parish of Botany, and County of Cumberland containing Eleven and three-quarters perches, or thereabouts, as shown on the Plan hereon, and therein edged red, being Lot 31 of Section 3, on a plan deposited in the Land Titles Office, Sydney No. 4066 and part of 30 acres (Portion 157 of Parish) delineated in the public map of the said Parish deposited in the Department of Lands originally granted to Mary Lewin by Crown Grant dated the first day of January one thousand eight hundred and ten.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto signed my name and affixed my Seal, this First day of August one thousand nine hundred and twelve.¹³

Note: Mary Lewin married Andrew Byrne who is an ancestor of Robert Byrne (Uncle Bob).

Apparently, Rosenia was also a spiritual lady. Perhaps following in the footsteps of her paternal Aunt, Harriet Williscroft who was noted in publications as “Madam Williscroft, Fortune Teller”. According to stories relayed to Aunty Jan from Nan Apps, Rosenia use to go to special church gatherings.

¹³ Certificate of Title New South Wales Register Book, Vol, 2277 Folio 100. Original held on file M. Hope

Research on Rosenia “Maude” WEBBER 1875 - 1927

Rosenia became ill and was diagnosed with cancer of the rectum.

Apparently she had to visit the hospital for treatment on various occasions but the trip via horse and dray was far too painful for Rosenia to bear. Her husband and son in law, George Apps, modified a chair for her and it was in this chair they carried her to the hospital. Presuming it was Royal South Sydney Hospital, as it was approximately 3 miles distance from her home.

Rosenia knew she was dying hence she prepared her Last Will & Testament on 13 December 1926. She made Dolly's husband, John Sigel, the executor of her will as per the following:

I give and Bequeath my property known as 'Claremont' Government Road Mascot as follows,

Twelve months after my decease the property to be sold and out off the proceeds of same I bequeath to my husband Edward Matthews the sum of (£ 100) One hundred pounds and the balance of the proceeds of sale to be equally divided between my six daughters, Dorothy, Annie, Ethel, Maude, Gladys and Edna, I also bequeath to my youngest daughter Edna my piano.

She signed her name Rosenia Maude Matthews (*Indicating the correct spelling*).

It is likely that the only girls living at home by 1927 were Gladys, who married just 4-1/2 weeks prior to Rosenia's death, and the youngest daughter, Edna who was 17 years old.

Gladys and George continued to live in 'Claremont' until the house was sold and they moved into a property in Government Road known as 'Adawill'. So named as the owners of the property were Ada & William Baxter. (As told to me by Jack Apps). They lived in this house until around 1935 when Gladys & George Apps purchased 107 Robey Street, Mascot. I predict 1935 as Jack, Gwen and Mary were born at Government Rd and Dorothy was born at Crown St., hospital. Joyce, Jan & Glenis were all born at 107 Robey Street.

Research on Rosenia “Maude” WEBBER 1875 - 1927

I hope you have found the above information of interest and thank you to Aunty Gwen and Daryl for prompting me to put pen to paper to share this information with whoever may have an interest in our family.

It is a wonderful journey to be able to get acquainted with those who have gone before me as it is their genes I carry and allows me to understand a little of their life.

“Learning your family history is the key to unlocking who you are”

“Everyone deserves to be remembered”

We inherit from our ancestors gifts so often taken for granted. Each of us contains within this inheritance of soul. We are links between the ages, containing past and present expectations, sacred memories and future promises. - Edward Sellner.

“To forget one’s ancestors is to be a brook without a source, a tree without roots.” - Chinese Proverb

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