

The Mashman Family

This significant family of the Willoughby Municipality is well known for its connections with the pottery industry in Sydney. The following is a brief history of the Mashman family and its association with the Mashman Brothers Pottery in Victoria Avenue, Chatswood (then Willoughby). Further information can be obtained regarding this family and the potteries they owned and operated by contacting the Willoughby District Historical Society and Museum and/or purchasing the book 'Pottery: A Willoughby Pioneer Industry: The Mashman Story' from the WDHS&M.



William Mashman

Henry Mashman

John Mashman

Above Images: Picture Willoughby, Local Studies Collection, Willoughby City Council

Pottery skills were generational in the Mashman family, beginning with James Mashman (born 1824) who was apprenticed to Sir Henry Doulton at the Doulton Lambeth works in England. As was the common practice of the time, his sons became apprenticed there also – William (born 1851) apprenticed at age 13 becoming a small wares thrower, Charles (born 1852) a thrower, Henry (born 1855) a fancy ware thrower, John (born 1858) an expert at turning and sticking. A pottery apprenticeship at that time took 10 years to complete.

James Mashman died in January 1876. His eldest son William married Miss Charlotte Bundock later that same year and moved to her home at Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. Here he gained employment through a relative William Day who was employed as a mold maker at the 'Victoria Pottery'. William and Charlotte Mashman had two sons Henry William (born 1877) and Frederick Albert (born 1879).

Following the death of his wife Charlotte in June 1880 William Mashman convinced his brother Henry to migrate to Australia in 1883 due to opportunities available for artisans. He left his two sons in the care of their grandmother Mrs Bundock, until they could be sent for. In July 1883 William and Henry arrived in Sydney on the clipper 'Windsor Castle'. They began work soon after at the Fieldsend Pottery at Maitland, and were soon looking for a suitable area around Sydney in which to set up a business for themselves. The North Shore district of Sydney was attractive as it had plenty of clay deposits of excellent quality.

In December 1884 aboard the steamship 'Albergeldie' another two of the brothers arrived in Australia, Charles (born 1852) and George (born 1865). Charles being an excellent thrower worked with his brothers for a few years. George became a Church of England Minister.

In July 1885, William and Henry Mashman formed a partnership with John Sandison to form the 'Mashman & Sandison Victoria Pottery, Willoughby' (now Victoria Avenue, Chatswood). The three partners set to work with the assistance of a boy who turned the potter's wheel. The Mashman brothers began work in the pottery making salt glazed domestic ware. The Mashman family all lived in residences on the Chatswood site at this time.

In October 1887, William Mashman's sons, Henry and Frederick arrived in the care of Mrs Mary Jane Johnson. Henry, aged 10, began working at the pottery with his father, whilst his brother Frederick attended school, later also joining the pottery trade.

A fifth brother John worked in partnership with William and Henry. In 1888 John Mashman arrived with their mother Harriet, living in a second house in Jacques Street. John joined the firm as a skilled turner and sticker and the business was expanded with the purchase of a steam driven pipe machine which improved production. By 1890 John Mashman took over a small redware and pipe factory, 'the Carrington Pottery', at Auburn. He bought Sanderson's share of the Chatswood pottery in 1890, the pottery becoming "Mashman Brothers Victoria Pottery'.

Henry Mashman married Elizabeth Theresa Simpson registered at St Leonards in 1893. In 1895, Henry's eldest son Ernest James Theodore (Theo) Mashman was born. Henry's second son Harry Raymond Clifford Mashman was born in 1902. By the turn of the century most of the Mashman family had ceased to live on the Chatswood pottery site.

The pottery at Chatswood expanded to cover 10 blocks bounded by 4 streets. By 1906 there were approximately 29 employees at the Chatswood pottery site, the Mashman Pottery being a major employer of local residents over many years.

The Chatswood pottery site continued to be operated by members of the Mashman family until 1960 when Doulton's fully took over the site. Vitreous china bathroom ware became the main products produced at the Chatswood site. The pottery is well known for the artware it produced in the late 1800s and from the 1920s until the 1950s.

Over 20 members of the extended Mashman family over 4 generations worked in the pottery industry in Sydney from 1885 until 2011 when the last pottery closed. Five potteries in total were taken over or established by the Mashman family throughout Sydney.

References

1. Ford, G Australian Pottery: The first 100 Years, Salt Glaze press, 1995, pp100-116.
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3. Leighway –Newsletter of the Leigh Society Vol 17-New Year 2006 p17
4. Phone interview with Michael Mashman February 2013