JOHN OLD

John Old was the third son of Richard Old & Jane Liddicoat. He was born on 28 June 1821 in St Mawgan in Pydar, Cornwall, England, and emigrated to New Zealand along with his parents and siblings on the barque 'Essex' in 1842. John was not living with his parents at the time of the 1841 Census, and it’s fairly safe to assume he was working on someone else’s farm at the time.

John Old & Mary Jane Knuckey met on the ship coming to New Zealand. At the time John was 21 and Mary Jane was 13. They arrived in New Plymouth on 15 January 1843, and were rowed ashore in Longboats on the 20th January.

1. [**Photo: Marriage record**](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=48ED03BE-BF6B-48C2-8448-117BDB962517)

John and Mary Jane were married on 15 February 1845 in the Te Henui Chapel, New Plymouth, by William Bolland, 2 years and 1 month after arriving in New Zealand. John was now 23 and Mary Jane was 15. Their marriage was witnessed by Maria Williams Wills and Robert Old. All four signed with a X as none of them were literate.

1. [**Slide: Map Omata**](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=CEA08E58-8A4A-4FE0-8F48-CDFFA25E93F3)

A list of New Plymouth Houses, Cottages and Whares as at 31.1.1846 names John Old as living in a Cottage owned by Richard Knuckey, who was a brother of Mary Jane’s father. The cottage was in Omata. The first 5 of John and Mary Jane’s children were born in Fitzroy, New Plymouth. In the 1855 Juror’s List John Old is named as an Omata Farmer.

1. [**Slide: Omata Stockade**](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=9A780F12-593A-4D57-95E1-6CA6AB82E519)

The Omata Stockade was built at Omata, just south of New Plymouth, during the turbulent 1850’s when wholesale war threatened North Taranaki.

The stockade was manned by British troops. Their task was to guard the southern entrance to the town, apprehending any hostile Māori observed moving north, possibly endangering the town.

However, very little action was seen here, with the notable exception of the battle of Waireka, which was fought nearby on 28 March 1860. But by then John Old had gone.

The family moved to Wanganui in 1856, where another 11 children were born. In the 1858 Juror’s List John Old is listed as a Labourer in Wanganui.

Two factors caused John Old to leave New Plymouth.  One was the growing difficulty of earning a livelihood, for the bad times came early to the Taranaki settlement, and the other was the growing restlessness of the Maori people who resented many of the intrusions of the white farmers into the lands that had been traditional Maori preserves.

1. [**1840 map coastline**](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=0D118CB9-C3E5-4FBB-B213-BE846049DCFE)

John Old left his wife and children with her family (the Knuckey's) and set off to Wanganui where conditions were better.  He went around the coast, as the inland route was then known only to the Maori, and his accommodation was with the Maori in their settlements.  He travelled on foot, which meant he was several days reaching Wanganui. At one Pa, a guard was put on the doorway to prevent him from leaving.  John Old arose early, stepping over the sleeping sentry, and was away before the other inhabitants realized he was no longer there.

1. **[Photo Denlair area](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=D133C185-7DCA-463B-9B8A-F73B58A72727)**

In Wanganui he took up a tract of land near Fordell, which is thirteen miles south-east by rail from Wanganui - but there was some dispute over the title and eventually he had to purchase another farm at Denlair, Lot 227, Denlair (210 acres), about four miles beyond Fordell. He soon had a house built and sent for his family who travelled by ship from New Plymouth to Wanganui.  It is recorded that in 1855 the ship 'Mary Jane' had as passengers, Mrs. Old and four children, who returned at times to visit anxious parents and relatives in New Plymouth.

The 1870 – 1874 Electoral Rolls list - Old, John, Wanganui, freehold; in Matarawa district, 200 acres unsurveyed land  adjoining property of Pat Shields, P Bryce & D Campbell.

The children grew up on the farm at Denlair, receiving their education at a tiny school, the forerunner of the Denlair School, situated near where the hilly section of the No.2 Line begins at the place known as Sutherland's Hill.  There was a road surveyed from Denlair to this place, but it was never more than a track through the bush and scrub.  The highest class in the school was Std 4.

1. [**Denlair School Prizegiving**](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=22E4351E-6DFE-4E1B-83FD-E17888A3684F)

This Newspaper article from 22 December 1903 has some names that are familiar to me. Frank, Annie, Martha and Charlie Kurth were my uncles and aunties. They were my father’s brothers and sisters.

1. [**Matarawa Church**](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=9F4106B4-D6F8-4274-8173-35FB6E1A9301)

Mary Jane Old died on the 4th March, 1887, aged 59 years, and John Old lived to his 75th year, dying on the 1st May, 1896. John died at the home of his son-in-law, Frank Kurth, in Fordell.

1. **[Headstone](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=D8769B36-1365-4E05-A68B-95FC1CEB102A)**

Both John and Mary Jane Old are buried at St John's Churchyard, Matarawa Cemetery, Wanganui, along with two of their daughters, Mary Ann in 1866 and Margaret in 1872.

1. [**Photo John Old**](http://www.famnet.org.nz/docs_pages_NoReg/DocsGeneral.aspx?DOCid=3E5436F1-742D-474B-8E1E-7C3628D8596B)