


#52 Ancestors 2020 Week 25 Unexpected

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#52 Ancestors 2020

Week 25 - Unexpected.

My 2 x great grandmother Jane Armitage emigrated to Australia with her husband, Richard Mason, but I was surprised to discover that the rest of her family – her parents and her 4 siblings all emigrated to the United States of America. I wonder why?



Jane was the eldest of Richard and Phoebe Armitage's children. She was born in Ballingarry, County Tipperary in 1815, two years after Richard's marriage to Phoebe Murray. At the age of 16 she married Richard Mason, also of Ballingarry. Richard is described in the immigration documents as an agricultural labourer, but Ballingarry was also the centre of the coal mining industry in the 19th century, so perhaps some of his family may have been miners.

Jane and Richard had four children born in Tipperary – Phoebe (1834), Grace (1835) Giles (1837) and Eliza (1839). In 1841 they set off from Cork for Australia as assisted immigrants on board the Woodbridge, arriving in Sydney on 8 March 1842.

It appears that Richard and his family travelled almost immediately to Bathurst, west of Sydney. It was here that baby Eliza died and Charlotte, my great grandmother was born (July 1842). On Charlotte's baptism certificate, Richard is described as a shepherd, but he is also variously listed as a "dealer", a "dairyman" an "ironmonger" and a "farmer". It wasn't long before the family left Bathurst and moved to Emu Creek in the Hunter valley near Singleton where their next child was born in 1845. This girl was called Elizabeth but was known as Eliza. She and Charlotte were to go on to marry two brothers, Anthony and Henry Whitten.

Back in Ireland, there was trouble in Ballingarry. A rebellion against British rule broke out there on 29 July 1848. A rebellion against British rule broke out there on 29 July, 1848. The area was still in the grip of the potato famine, thousands of people had died and there was a great resentment against the English. It was here in Ballingarry, during this uprising, that the national tricolour of green, white and orange was first unfurled, emulating the French rebels who had also taken to the streets with their tricolour for the first time earlier that year. The site of this rebellion, known as the *Famine Warehouse*, is now a national monument. (It's a nice irony that the three ringleaders of this rebellion were sentenced to be "Hung, drawn and quartered" but were instead transported to Australia).



Famine Warehouse Museum today

Perhaps this unrest was the catalyst for Richard and Phoebe Armitage and their four unmarried children to make the decision to emigrate. I wonder though, why they didn't follow Jane, but chose instead to go to America. They sailed from Liverpool and arrived in New York at Castle Garden (the arrivals port before the establishment at Ellis Island) on 3 December 1849. Sadly, the ship's list includes the crossed-out name of Phoebe, and the notation that she had died at sea on 8 November.

226 Mary Armitage	28	5	Armitage	27	28	
227 Richard Armitage	65	10	Armitage	20	20	
228 Phoebe Armitage	16	10	Armitage	20	20	Died at Sea
229 William Armitage	24	10	Armitage	20	20	
230 Richard Armitage	16	10	Armitage	20	20	
231 Eliza Armitage	30	10	Armitage	20	20	
232 Phoebe Armitage	20	10	Armitage	20	20	

extract from Shipping record showing Armitage family

At this stage, Eliza was 30, William about 23, Phoebe about 16 and Richard jnr about 13. They were all able to go to work. The family settled in Wayne, New York, but we know that William later moved on. There is a record in a collection of biographies of citizens of Livingstone County, Illinois, which charts his progress. He worked mainly in the brick industry, he married a Miss Ann Thorp and together they had 9 children. He was a devout Methodist and helped to build his local church.

We know little about the others. Phoebe died in 1852, when she would still have been a teenager. Richard married and he died in Auburn, NY in 1901. Eliza seems not to have married until she was in her fifties. As the eldest daughter she was probably thrust into the responsibility of looking after the rest of the family when her mother died.

Back in Australia, Jane and Richard's family grew to eventually include 10 children and more than 60 grandchildren. They remained in the Hunter Valley area, where Richard died at 54 after a fall from a horse in January 1863. He was buried next to the church at Fallbrook but

there is nothing there now to mark the place. After his death, Jane moved to live near her daughters Charlotte and Eliza and she died there, at Charlotte's property Lowestoft on 16 November 1877.