

Christadelphians

Chambers Dictionary

A small religious sect, holding conditional immortality, denying a personal devil - sometimes called Thomasites from Dr John Thomas of Brooklyn (1805-71.) Literally "Brethren of Christ".

Collins English Dictionary

A member of a Christian millenarian sect (relating to 1000 years) founded in US about 1848 holding that only the just will enter eternal life, that the wicked will be annihilated & that the ignorant and unconverted and infants will not be raised from the dead.

Encyclopaedia Britannica

Sometimes called Thomasites:- John Thomas after studying medicine in London migrated in 1830 to Brooklyn NY. There he first joined the followers of Thomas & Alexander Campbell, but afterwards struck out independently, preaching largely upon the application of Hebrew prophecy and of the book of Revelation to current and future events. Both in USA & Britain he gathered a number of adherents. The name Christadelphians was adopted during the Civil War when the denomination had to organize formally in order to justify its objection to military service.

The local organization, called an ecclesia, is congregational in polity, with no distinction of clergy and laity. Ruling or serving brethren are elected and minister without compensation.

Robert Whitten - Uncle Bob 1866 - 1951

Born at "Lowestoft" in 1866 to Anthony and Charlotte Whitten. During his boyhood, the family must have been struggling to become established. When sheep were introduced I know the elder boys had to do shepherding before there was wire for fencing. Ted was 3 years younger, because Jennie came between and he used to return home dragging his feet. Bob who was strong and energetic could still move with a leap and a bound and balancing something on his head. Once Ted wanted to confide a problem "My thoughts are troubling me" but Bob just laughed and that was the end of that.

Perhaps he had some schooling at Wallingford, as Jennie did, before they built their own schoolhouse.

The family must have left for Nassau after the railway was completed in 1882. I think Anthony hoped to run a store but he left because of his children's education. During that period Alfred Giles was born. With the thought of yet another mouth to feed, legend has it that Anthony resorted to the bottle (rum I suppose). Bob then 16 yrs old had to hold him down and in later years of ill feeling said that the wickedness of the Father entered the newborn baby!

Later they returned and Bob's selection was named "Ferncliff" after which he was nicknamed "Ferry". A farm tool which was apt the time the user a nip on the hand was called

Ferry's address. At some stage of his life because of some misdemeanor, perhaps cattle-rustling^{or sheep stealing} which was not unusual in the early days, it was thought advisable for him to leave the country. He went to NZ and maybe worked as a carpenter for a time.

PAEROA Later he had property in the Rotorua area, according to KK who established contact with Boli's two daughters. He had married Marion (Marie) McGregor 24th April 1896 and had two daughters Iris & Eileen both of whom are now dead.

1. Iris m Phil Anderson (no children) but they brought up Jessamine.
2. Eileen married Ken Weber & had 3 children
 - (a) Jessamine (single)
 - (b) Aroha m Merwyn Green
Janice (b 24th April 1958)
Valerie
Murray & Deane (twins)
Friona
Karen
Lyndsie
Stephanie
 - (c) Linden (m Paula?)
Helen
Stephen
David
Mark
Bronwyn

I'm not sure when Aunt Minnie died but I remember Uncle Bob visiting us at Castle Hill when I was 9 (1924) He came with ^{aged} (58) Auntie Hilda's half brother, Chris Dawson who later went as missionary to Sth America and disappeared in the Amazon region. I think Bob may have been attending a course at Hawkebury College, but I can't tell why. Beekeeping? When we visited "Lowestoft" for holidays 1925 & again 1928, ¹⁹³⁰ Bob would be visiting and take his turn with washing dishes and rounding up young ones to pull out horsebound in the "calf-paddock". Even as a child, I had a feeling he was somehow "on the outside" and when Grandma died, the rest of the family brought out his share. Maybe that accounted for his bitterness to Dad.

He had had property in NZ but when he left it was eaten up for payment of back rates. He had some property in Queensland.

He was perpetually advertising or writing letters to the press. If a fortnight passed without, the other brothers suspect something is wrong. One prize ad was "To let - women and poets need not apply". Another week there was a rather nasty letter about old Bob Whitten having a fall. Uncle Harry was going to complain when he discovered Bob had put it in himself.

To Let - for races, garages, lawns, camping reserves, grazing paddocks, money lent, Bag-snatchers barred. R. Whitten

When his brother ~~and~~ Fred was a member of the cemetery board, he wasirate because Bob had fenced in land adjacent to the cemetery and offered it for rental.

As time went on, he became more eccentric and neglected himself. The younger cousins, dressed in their best would see him coming with a string of dogs and try to sneak past unnoticed on the other side of the road. Bob who had a very quick eye would call, "Goodday Whitten!" to their great embarrassment. He was known as "Knuts & Bolts".

was remembered one story. When Bob was in A & W's bad looks for some reason, Albert who held his mother in special regard, said, "Alf, remember he's a son of Charlotte Whitten and therefore a prince among men".

After A & W's death, Mother went in 1958 to New Zealand and made a visit to New Plymouth to visit Lois. It was for her a somewhat delicate mission because that branch of the family were converts to Christadelphian sect. Mother had a happy visit, looked from her bedroom window and had a perfect view of Mt Egmont before a curtain of mist closed it off. She found them kindly people, good-living & concerned particularly with the Education of the Deaf (I think)

Nowadays, I imagine some of the tenets of their faith would not seem so bizarre. Years ago when she learned that Christadelphians did not believe in a personal devil Aunt Beatrice dressed up a whole family of mountain devils with pipe-clearers & red wool, gave them to Bob for a joke.

When visiting Wallalahah in 1985, for the family reunion with Maurice & Doris, we were rather sad to learn that Bob was buried beside his parents in the local cemetery in an unmarked grave. At the time his daughters had been approached but whether because no love was lost or because of their beliefs or because money was short, they declined to arrange it. They preferred to use any money available in the service of the living.

He died in 1951 at the age of 85.

Both remembered a saying of Bob's "Mind your eye-brows"

PAH As I first remember Uncle Bob, he was a strong vigorous upstanding man who didn't appear to be almost 60. In some ways he was more like AGW in stature, aquiline nose, moustache and to some extent with sharp eagle eyes.

Harry of Bob.

"He's a queer mixture. If you were sick, he'd sit up and poultice you all night and as soon as you were well, he'd murder you."

Bob was described as a carpenter. He it was who built the old schoolhouse & later Uncle Harry's letter box which always intrigued us, rather like a miniature of the house.

Annual fraternal gatherings are held for fellowship and Bible study. In the USA in 1960 about 500 ecclesias, 350 in Britain, 65-70 in Australia & in Tasmania and several in NZ. They publish 2 magazines

The Bible is the only authoritative creed, and membership of the society requires a profession of faith and baptism by immersion. The group rejects the orthodox views of the Trinity and its theology is strongly millenarian, centring in the hope of a world-wide theocracy with its seat at Jerusalem and involving belief in a conditional immortality of the body.