CROKER PRIZE FOR BIOGRAPHY 2023

2319 Myth of the Millionaire – James Tyson 1819-1898

by Marguerita Carey

Submitted by Marguerita Carey
Croker Prize for Biography 2023 - Society of Australian Genealogists

MYTH OF THE MILLIONAIRE James Tyson 1819 – 1898

A myth is a traditional narrative usually involving supernatural or fancied persons etc. and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena etc..[1]

When I first heard the story of James Tyson I regarded it as a myth or a tall story of a fancied person and although I researched the story, I could not find out the full story until this year. James Tyson MLC QLD. died on the 4 December 1898 at his residence Felton, Queensland, aged 79 years. He was buried in Toowoomba and reburied in 1901 with his parents in the Church of England Cemetery in Campbelltown, New South Wales.[2]

Tyson Grave, St Peters Campbelltown, NSW

[1] The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 1964, 1976.
[2] *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* 13 December 1901, p.28. Photo Taken by Marguerita Carey 19 April 2023.

James Tyson did not leave a will. He was known as the 'richest man in Australia'. James was one of a family of six sons and four daughters, all had predeceased him except a half sister Mrs Shields of Wilton near Sydney.

The first I heard of the Tysons was from my mother, that my grandfather Walter McCue (1885 – 1968) had a half-brother, James McCue (1873-1906), born New York, America who had married a widow, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Cole (1873 – 1953). They in turn had a son, James Patrick McCue (1906-1989). Unfortunately American born James McCue died of a heart attack on 18 April 1906 and was buried at Appin, NSW[3]. The son James Patrick McCue born in 1906 married Frances Alice Kirton (1907 -1981) known as Alice, who had been brought up by her grandmother Frances Annie Eagles nee Moore (1851 – 1933) who was the niece of James Tyson the millionaire.[4] Both her parents had died soon after Alice's birth in 1907[5] her mother in July and her father Stephen James Kirton in August . 'His wife had died a month ago leaving a family of eight children'.[6] Alice received cheques from the estate of her grandmother Frances Annie (Fanny) Eagles nee Moore whose grandparents William Tyson and Mary Coulson were the parents of Australia's richest man, James Tyson (1819 – 1898). James Tyson's sister Mary Ann Tyson married Patrick Moore. Mary Ann and Patrick had four children surviving in 1898; Isabella Moore (1840-1917) married John Buckley in 1858 and in 1870 Philip Dwyer (1847-1913); William Moore (1844-1906); Frances Annie (Fanny) Moore (1851 – 1933) married Archer Eagles); Alice Moore (1860-1931) married Timothy Fahey. These descendants of James Tyson's sister, Mary Ann Moore were able to inherit. It was not until this year that I was able to research this family and with the help of TROVE newspapers to find that this was no myth.

James Tyson's parents, married in England in Newcastle on Tyne in 1806[7]. Isabella Tyson (nee Coulson) tried 25 April 1808 in York in the West Riding of Yorkshire, England, sentence 7 years and husband William Tyson with son William Tyson travelled on the transport ***Indispensable*** arriving 19 August 1809 in Sydney.[8] One child Margaret, born in England, remained there. Children, Charles, Mary Ann, Elizabeth, James, Barbara, John and Peter were born in New South Wales[9]. After the death of the father William Tyson in 1827 their mother Isabella married Thomas Clement and had three more children .[10]

---

[3] Appin St Bedes Cemetery Records James McCue died 15 April 1906 http://towersretreat.abundance.org.au/smt-appin.html

[4] McCue Family records NSW B D Ms;; Death Certificate James McCue 1906 4652; Marriage Certificate James McCue, 1905 07737; Birth Certificate James Patrick McCue 1906 12032

[5] *South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus* 27 July 1907. Alice's mother, Alice Maud Kirton nee Eagles died of failure of the heart's action following an accouchement, soon after Alice's birth on 22 July

[6] *Evening News* 21 Aug 1907, p.1. her father Stephen James Kirton was killed by a fall of earth in a cutting for a tramline near Bellambi in August

[7] *Australian Star 5 August 1899, p.6*

[8] SRNSW ref: 4/4004pp311-316.

[9] *Biographical Database of Australia, Isabella Tyson.* Convict Indents; Church Registers; Census records.

[10] *Herald 14 September 1899, p.1*

James Tyson's name perhaps from his many amiable eccentricities was known throughout the bushland. Myths or tales of him, more or less false, were told in every station hut and around every camp fire. He had a habit of addressing whoever he was speaking to as "Mister"; running away from a petticoat (a woman); "continually cutting up tobacco which he never smoked"[11]. Mrs Dwyer formerly Isabella Buckley nee Moore (1840 – 1817) the sister of Alice's grandmother Fanny Eagles nee Moore gave an interview to an *Evening News* representative describing the **myths** that had been perpetuated against James Tyson.

> His carelessness in dress was proverbial. He was generous. He over and over pressed £50 or £100 on a needy relative or friend. He was thrifty to a degree. He would never ride first class on the railway as he placed no value whatever on the extra comfort afforded. When asked why he rode second class he often replied, 'Well, mainly because there isn't a third class carriage'. His method of engaging a manager was to dress himself in the character of a man looking for work and go and get a job as a rouseabout or something similar so that he could criticise the new man. Very often he abandoned the disguise after a few days and sent the new 'boss' about his business. Once he was arrested by a policeman for having a stolen horse in his possession . When Tyson admitted who he was the policeman apologized but Tyson complemented him on tracing the horse. The millionaire advised the young not to drink, smoke or kiss a woman. He did not believe in marriage and it was said many of his relatives did not marry for fear of incurring his displeasure. In regard to travelling he rarely told anyone where he was going and when he was returning. He generally travelled under an assumed name. He never saw the inside of a theatre or a church. Yet he would always contribute to a new church.[12]

His estate was said by to be worth at least £2,360,000 but no will was found. He was said to have a prejudice against making a will. One report states that 'his relations will doubtless be glad, because the probability is they will get more out of the deceased man's estate than they would have done had he disposed of his property in the usual manner.[13] Property in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria was distributed to 29 relatives although 170 claims were rejected. The surviving children of Mary Moore, James Tyson's sister received one thirty second each.[14] Alice McCue wife of James Patrick McCue would hopefully receive her portion with the death of Fanny Eagles her grandmother who died in 1933 leaving six children, 25 grandchildren and ten great grandchildren[15].

---

[11] *Kiama Independent, and Shoalhaven Advertised 8 December 1898, p.4as reported in the Evening News*
[12] *Shoalhaven Telegraph*10 December 1898, p.3.
[13] *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* 10 December 1898, p.4
[14] *Gympie Times and Mary River* Mining Gazette Master of Equity Next of Kin Inquiry. *14 April 1900, p.3*
[15] *Catholic Press, 9 February 1933, p.24* .Alice and James McCue had 2 children: (Steve) James J (1933-1933) and Ronald (1937 – 1977).