

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE4807

James, Maude Wordsworth

(1855 - 1936)

Born 19 December, 1855

Died 31 December, 1936, Adelaide South Australia Australia

Occupation Composer, jewellery designer, Poet

Details

Maude Wordsworth James was born 'at sea' on 19 December 1855 aboard the ship *Morning Star* in the Indian Ocean approximately 2,500 kilometres south west of Western Australia. Her parents, Thomas and Alicia Crabbe, had sailed from Bristol in October bound for Melbourne as unassisted immigrants. When the couple boarded the *Morning Star* they had 3 children. Maude was their fourth. Between 1856 and 1871 Alicia bore another 6 children.

Maude spent her childhood in Victoria moving from Williamstown near Melbourne, to Portland, Dunnolly and Maryborough. She met her husband, Charles Wordsworth Scantlebury James, in Maryborough and they were married at the All Saints Church in Bendigo on 3 November 1875. Maude was aged 19 and Charles was 25. Their first son, Cyril Haughton, was born in Bendigo, Victoria in 1878. Two years later Maude bore a daughter who died when only sixteen days old. The couple moved to Hobart at some stage between 1878 and 1883 where their third child, Tristram (b. 4/3/1883) and another daughter, Yolande (b. 15/7/1889) were both born.

Maude's husband, Charles, was a civil engineer who obtained work in Kalgoorlie in 1896. After working for one of the mining companies in Kalgoorlie for almost a year he telegraphed Maude asking that she and their children join him. As the town of Kalgoorlie expanded the financial position of the James family seemed secure. Maude's husband Charles was now employed by the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council as the town surveyor and, while they had not made a fortune, life was more comfortable than when they first moved to Mullingar. By 1907 the 'tent' they inhabited in 1897 was a weatherboard cottage with a separate dining room and they could afford to pay a woman to help with the household duties. However, Maude felt that they needed more money and she took it upon herself to find a means of earning an income. She conceived an idea for Australian souvenir jewellery and she designed, patented and organised for the manufacture of her 'Coo-ee' jewellery. Incorporating Australian fauna, flora and indigenous motifs she sold brooches, bangles, cuff links, pins and spoons which were made from Australian gold and featured tourmaline from Kangaroo Island, opals from Queensland and pearls from Broome. These designs were registered in England and New Zealand, as well as in Australia. Maude proudly pasted in her journal articles about an exhibition in Perth in December 1907 that displayed her designs and a page from the *Australian Jewellery Manufacturing Gazette* that advertised her 'Coo-ee' jewellery.

Published resources

Book Section

Introduction, Davis, Jane

Edited Book

Symbols of Australia, White, Richard and Harper, Melissa, 2010

Book

Gold and Silversmithing in Western Australia, Erickson, Dorothy, 2010

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

Karlkurla Gold: A History of the Women of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Criena Fitzgerald and National Foundation for Australian Women, 2012,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wikb/wikb-home.html>

Author Details

Dr Jane Davis

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