

# A Fateful Marriage



Ngahiraka Waitangi Wood



James Wood's daughter marries John Kennedy's son

Photos c. 1888



Joseph B. Kennedy

**CAPTAIN JAMES WOOD.** Jill Kemp writes in her manuscript 'South to the Left of Venus' that Commander James Wood established a strong relationship with Maori, negotiating with various chiefs to procure spars in exchange for bartered goods and at the same time securing protection.

As a sign of respect and gratitude, Commander Wood was offered a Maori wife, Matarena Waitangi of the Ngai Tamahau tribe of Opotiki. As eldest daughter of Chief Hotu of the Whakatohea, she was a very high ranking woman.

The liaison between Matarena and Commander Wood resulted in a daughter, Ngahiraka, born around 1838 (meanwhile Wood also had a wife and three children in England!). Ngahiraka would marry three times, and coincidentally, her second marriage would be to Joseph Bond Kennedy, son of John Kennedy (see below), and it was believed they had six children together.

**JOHN BOND KENNEDY** was a well educated Scot sent to NZ by the British admiralty as an agent to arrange for a constant source of kauri spars. He arrived on the *Buffalo* in 1837 (then under command of James Wood) and stayed behind.

Kennedy had also taken a Maori wife, Chieftainess Rangirauwaka/ Katerina (Katie) Taurangi and settled at Harataunga (Kennedy Bay); they would have several children leaving many of the region's families descended from this relationship, in particular those of Kennedy Bay which was given his name.

In 1843, as Kennedy sailed off on his schooner, *The Three Bees*, to do some banking, he was robbed of his sizable deposit and killed by three crewmembers. This left Kennedy's wife Katerina a widow and their four surviving children fatherless.

According to Jill, after his father was murdered, Joseph had run away to Gisborne at the tender age of 9 and, at the time he met Ngahiraka, was a sea captain on coastal traders to Auckland.

## DESCENDANTS LIVE IN THE REGION

Many of the older families in the Coromandel claim ties to this unique relationship between both a Wood and a Kennedy.

One imagines the two children of these influential men knew of their parents' previous connection? Or was it simply fate that brought them together...

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