

The Teschemaker Family

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Teschemaker and RAMM

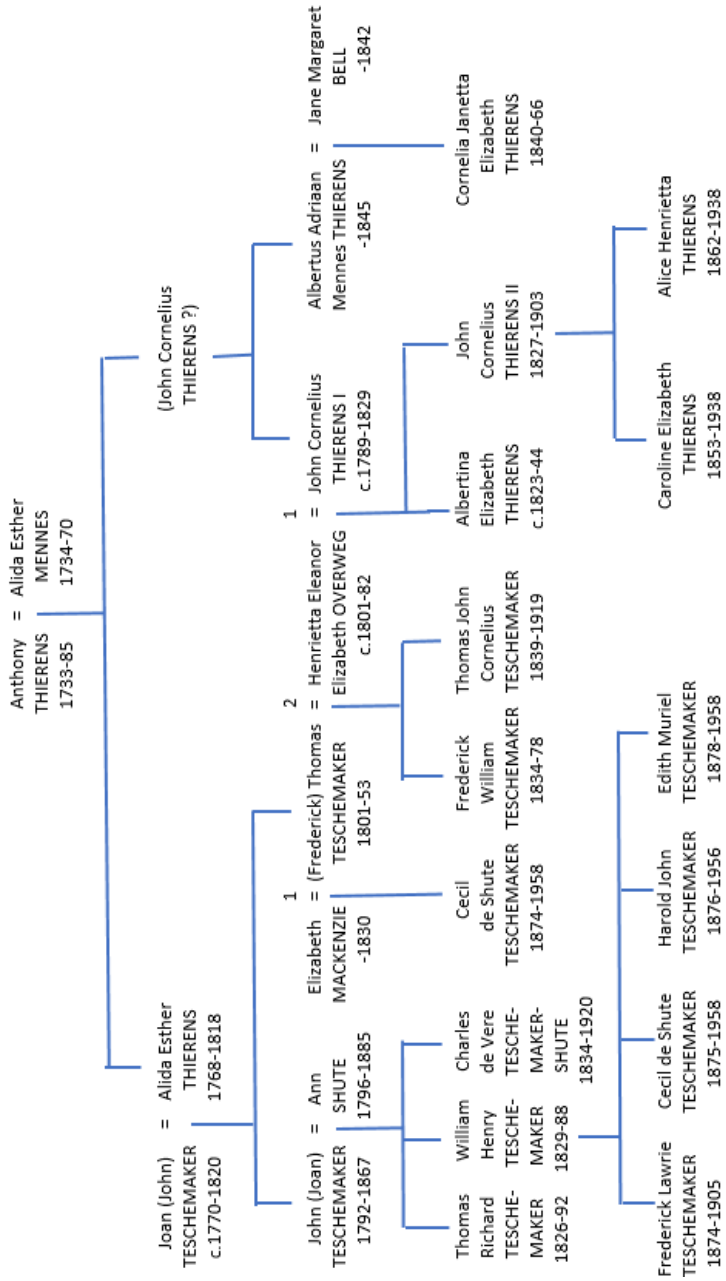
The Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) collection in Exeter contains 263 items that were donated to RAMM in 1869 by the Teschemaker family of Exmouth. They are thus amongst the earliest items to have been donated to the newly-opened RAMM. They comprise 179 natural history items, 80 ethnographic items, two antiquities, and two items of decorative art, the latter including a beautiful 18th century Dutch clock (made by the master clockmaker Jan Hendrik Kuhn) which also has the ability to play various dance tunes. The natural history items are mainly from the UK and from New Zealand, while the ethnographic items come from a variety of places (mainly from Demerara, which is part of what was then British Guiana, but also from India, Australia and New Zealand, and with one or two others from Sri Lanka and China).

The purpose of this paper is not to discuss these items, but to provide some background information about the family who donated the items, and their possible links to slavery. Almost all these Teschemaker gifts to the RAMM were given on 9 April 1869, a notable exception being the clock which was given in 1931. We need to identify the particular branch of the

Teschemaker family that gave these gifts and place them within the context of their family tree. A little research quickly reveals that another surname that frequently appears in connection with Teschemaker is Thierens, so both these names are worth investigation: both Teschemaker and Thierens are Dutch names.

Our investigations have involved examination of online records from Holland, Guyana, the UK and New Zealand. A rough family tree has been prepared, covering both the Teschemaker side and some related people on the Thierens side. It must be emphasized that this family tree is provisional. Particular difficulty was experienced in trying to establish which early Thierens members were related to the Teschemakers. Different sources indicate different relationships, and the tree shown here is the author's best estimate of the true situation.

Simplified family tree for Teschemaker/Thierens



Simplified Teschemaker Family tree

Guiana

The three parts – Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice – of what is now Guyana were under Dutch control for most of the 18th century. In 1796 the British won control of Essequibo and Demerara, and by 1800 there were already 380 sugar plantations in these colonies. By the London Convention of 1814 both colonies were formally ceded to Britain. The British occupied Berbice on and off around the end of the 18th century, and finally gained control of it in 1803. Under the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814 Berbice was formally ceded to the British, but it was not until 1831 that it was combined with Essequibo and Demerara to form the new British colony of British Guiana, with Sir Benjamin D'Urban (grandfather of William D'Urban, first curator of RAMM) as its first governor (until then he had been the governor just of Essequibo and Demerara).

Anthony Thierens was born in Essequibo, Guiana, in 1733, so it appears that his family was already well established out there at an early date. His death in 1785 was at Plantage Arthurville. In the Royal Gazette for 22 March 1817 there is a notice:

‘At the Commissary Court on 9 April 1817, the following Transports and Mortgages: 50. By the attorney of John McArthur, a first mortgage on Plantation Arthur Ville, formerly known as Plantation de Liefde, situate on the Island of Wackenham, Essequibo, with all the slaves, buildings and cultivation, in favour of Campbell, Baillies and Harper, of London.’

Arthurville, a sugar plantation, appears in the Compensation records. On 18 June 1836, more than £11,000 (equivalent to almost a million pounds today) was awarded to John McArthur for 210 enslaved people on that plantation.

It appears that Anthony Thierens and his wife Alida Esther Mennes had a daughter who was also called Alida Esther. She married Joan Teschemaker. Joan is a common Dutch first name, the equivalent of John in English. They had five children: Joan (who later modified his name to John), Frederick Thomas Emanuel (known as Tom), and three other children. For the purposes of identification, we have shown the father as Joan and the son as John. John had been born in Demerara in 1792.

The Teschemaker family returned to Britain in 1801, and Tom (the second son) was born in London that year. The 1802 Treaty of Amiens provided a temporary truce to hostilities between Britain and France, so the family moved back to Holland, but the truce was broken in 1803 when Britain declared war on France. France invaded Holland, and the Dutch economy almost collapsed. The Teschemaker parents lost most of their Dutch assets, and decided to return to Demerara, but left John to be educated in England. He went to Exeter College, Oxford, and then to Leyden to study law. He enrolled in the Volunteer Cavalry in 1815 and was present at the Battle of Waterloo. Then in 1819 John and his brother Tom returned to Demerara. In 1822, at the age of 29, John got married to Ann Shute in Marylebone. She had been born in Sydenham, Kent. They had eight children, some of whom we shall mention later.

John's younger brother Tom married Elizabeth Mackenzie in Demerara in 1828, and they had a child – Cecil de Shute Teschemaker – the middle name presumably in honour of Ann Shute, the child's aunt by marriage. Sadly, Elizabeth died in Demerara in February 1830, and in August 1831 Tom married Henrietta Eleanor (or maybe Leonora) Elizabeth Overweg. They got married in Barbados, which must have been something rather special, since they were both from Demerara.

Henrietta had been married before, and that is where the difficulty arises. Who exactly was Henrietta's first husband? Some sources say it was John Cornelius Thierens I, and indeed there is a record in the Demerara gazette indicating the Banns of Marriage for John Cornelius and Henrietta.¹ Henrietta was at that time a minor, and consent for the marriage was given by an attorney, V.A. Heyliger – perhaps her parents had died and he was the guardian - who went on to become First Marshal of Demerara, and later Acting President of the Colony and of the Court of Justice. Some sources suggest that John Cornelius I was the son of Anthony Thierens and Alida Esther Mennes, but that is impossible. John Cornelius I was not born until about 1789, by which time both of his supposed parents had already died.² John Cornelius I and Henrietta had two children,

¹ [List of marriages of grooms with surnames M-Z, from the Royal Gazette of British Guiana \(PDF\)](#)

² [Genealogie Timmerma website](#). Although we do not have a record of his birth date, we have a record of John Cornelius I's death in London on 4 August 1829, aged 40.

Albertina Elizabeth and John Cornelius II, and they feature later in our story.

A particular problem concerns a person called Albertus Adriaan Mennes Thierens. In line with some sources, he was originally included as Henrietta's first husband, but such a relationship seems unlikely. We do, however, know that he married Jane Margaret Bell in Leguan, Demerara, on 18 October 1839. They had one child, Cornelia Jenetta Elizabeth Thierens, born in December 1840. It seems likely that Albertus left Demerara following the death of his wife on 29 October 1842, and moved to Scotland, probably with his daughter. The daughter got married to James Arthur Sewell II on 25 March 1862 at St Thomas's Episcopal Church in Edinburgh, but sadly died, only four years later, on 30 July 1866. Albertus himself died on 3 September 1845, as reported in the local newspapers, and is buried in the Glasgow necropolis. According to information received from the LBS project at UCL, Albertus's will makes clear that he is the brother of John Cornelius Thierens I.³

³ A Dutchman by the surname Timmerman has done extensive research on his relatives, which is available online. For example, [the page on Anthony Thierens](#). He has included John Cornelius I and Albertus as sons of Anthony Thierens and Alida Esther Mennes. In fact, from other evidence, it would appear likely that their father's name was also John Cornelius, and perhaps he was the son of Anthony and Alida Thierens.

When slavery in the British colonies was finally abolished in 1834, Albertus received several payments in respect of different plantations and enslaved persons in British Guiana. According to the UCL compensation database, he received all or part of the following awards:

Date	Claim ID		Number of enslaved people	Amount
11 Jan 1836	BG 2374	Awardee (with Jan T. Cortes)	6 enslaved	£219 15s 11d
11 Jan 1836	BG 2399	Joint awardee (Executor)	105 enslaved	£5,709 17s 9d

The claim BG 2399 was in respect of the Nieuw Oosterbeck plantation. The claim was from the executors of E. Thierens (deceased) but it is unclear who this refers to. It was collected by George Eccles. Thomas Teschemaker was a joint awardee – he had registered 115 enslaved persons on the plantation in 1832 in the right of his wife Henrietta.

Date	Claim ID		Number of enslaved people	Amount
18 Jan 1836	BG 2402	Joint awardee (Executor)	13 enslaved	£652 1s 3d

Enslaved persons were registered by A. Thierens (Albert) and T. Teschemaker (Tom), in the name of the wife J.C. Teschemaker (presumably Henrietta), as the executor of the estate of J.C. Thierens (i.e. Henrietta's deceased first husband). Thomas Teschemaker was a joint awardee.

Date	Claim ID		Number of enslaved people	Amount
18 Jan 1836	BG 2537	Awardee	2 enslaved	£100 8s 9d
18 Jan 1836	BG 2539	Awardee	3 enslaved	£109 1s 0d
18 Jan 1836	BG 2540	Awardee	1 enslaved	£36 7s 0d
9 May 1836	BG 2536 A-C	Joint awardee	62 enslaved	£8,267 3s 6d 2536A: £4,313 11s 9d – Albert Thierens 2536B: £1,078 7s 11d – Thomas Teschemaker 2536C: £3,235 3s 9d – Eccles Group of 4

The number of enslaved people listed for BG 2536 A-C does not correspond with the total compensation paid, and must represent only one of the sub-awards, probably C. Albert Thierens and Thomas Teschemaker were executors of J.C. Thierens. The Eccles merchants, all of Glasgow, were trustees for the two young children of J.C. Thierens.

Even at the time of his death in 1845, Albertus still owned a half-share of two sugar plantations, Wesselvalligheid and Maria Elizabeth. The will of Albertus is available online at Ancestry, and also from the UK National Archives, but the transcript is almost impossible to read.

England

Tom and Henrietta Teschemaker stayed on in Demerara/Essequibo for some time after their marriage, because their son Frederick William was born there in 1834. Tom and his brother John owned the Amersfoort estate on Wakenaam Island in Essequibo, and on 6 February 1837 they received £5,293 6s 1d in compensation (equivalent to perhaps £400,000 in today's money) for the 106 enslaved persons on their estate.

By the time their second son Thomas John Cornelius was born in 1839, Tom was living in England; this son's birth was registered in Tiverton. In the 1841 Census, Tom was enumerated in Peter Street, Tiverton, and shown as being of independent means, no doubt due to his plantations in Demerara. His wife was not listed as present on census night.

Those present included their two children, Frederick William and Thomas John Cornelius, as well as her two children from her first marriage, A.E. Thierens and J.C. Thierens, who were both born abroad, presumably in Demerara.

When we come to the 1851 Census, we find Tom living at 22 Beacon Hill, Littleham, Exmouth. He is shown as a proprietor of West India property, presumably the slave plantations in Demerara. Also there is his wife Harriett – it is not unreasonable that she has now adopted the more anglicized version of Henrietta. Also in the household is the youngest son, Frederick W. But only two years later we find father Tom has died. He died on 26 September 1853. What is the family to do? The chosen route is emigration to New Zealand, following in the footsteps of Tom's nephew William Henry Teschemaker, so we need to look at what happened to William early in his life.

William, the nephew of Tom, was the fifth child of John and his wife Ann. He was born in Bath on 19 March 1829 and baptised at St Mary's, Bathwick on 10 April 1829. He was educated at Blundell's School in Tiverton (1840-1847) and then won an Exhibition to Exeter College, Oxford where he graduated in 1851. He subsequently received a Doctorate in Civil Law (DCL). Soon after graduation he and a friend (some sources call him a cousin) who had also just graduated (Edwin Francis Rich) headed off to New Zealand. It is not surprising that these two headed off together, because the 1851 census shows them as close neighbours in Exmouth.

New Zealand

After arriving in Wellington, William and Edwin crossed the Cook Strait to Nelson in South Island. They were initially tempted to join a party of four to head to Australia for the gold rush, but something changed their minds and instead they decided to become sheep farmers.⁴ The limited farmland in Nelson had already been taken up, so William and Edwin acquired 861 sheep and in March 1853 started to drive them south. When they arrived in the Canterbury region in June they found that all the best land had been taken, so they decided to carry on and acquire runs in the Otago region.

William and Edwin's flock of sheep were the first ever to cross the Waitaki River, and they moved onto their runs in early 1855, William at Kauru Hill and Edwin at Balruddery, but in partnership with each other. Edwin sold out to William in 1858, and moved further south, but William carried on and became a respected breeder of merino sheep. William later sold Balruddery but in 1860 he acquired more land at Taipo Hill, ten miles south west of Oamaru. An article in a local newspaper in 1878, entitled 'Chats with the farmers: A visit to Mr W.H. Teschemaker's Taipo Hill Estate, Kakanui' gives a detailed description of life on his farm.⁵

⁴ [Remembering William Henry Teschemaker, from the Culture Waitaki website](#)

⁵ ['The Farm', Otago Witness, Issue 1409, 23 November 1878, page 4](#)

In 1862 he built a homestead there, using Oamaru stone, and surrounded it with lawns and plantations of English trees. William remained a bachelor until his 40s, when he returned to England in 1872 and got married in Bath to Eliza Jeanette Pitman. They subsequently had at least seven children. Little is known of William's life outside of farming, but his contemporaries remembered him as a hard-working man whose life was significant to the history of North Otago. William died in 1888.

The Teschemaker family sold the Teschemaker estate in 1905, but in 1911 the new owners gifted the homestead and about 25 acres of land to the Dominican Congregation of Sisters. In 1912 they opened a school there, which eventually catered for 140 girls. In 1977 a decision was made to close the school, but the Dominican Sisters continued using the place as a Retreat and Conference Centre. In 2000 the property was sold to a gentleman who planned to turn it into a university site, but his dream was never realised because of a fire and his death soon afterwards. In 2011 the new owners opened Teschemakers as a Wedding and Conference Centre.

Among William's siblings, William's elder brother Thomas Richard was born in Bath in 1826. When he got married in Tiverton on 30 June 1863, he was described by the Exeter Flying Post on 8 July as 'Major Thomas Richard Teschemaker, Esq., D.C.L., retired list, of Exmouth, formerly of Amersford, Demerara'. This was because he had spent 20 years, from 1841

to 1860, with the Bombay Artillery. Soon after he retired as Captain, he was given the honorary rank of Major.⁶

William's younger brother, Charles de Vere, came out to New Zealand in 1854, only a year or two after William. Initially he took up several sheep runs in the far south of the country, before managing William's Taipo run near Oamaru, and then going on to manage another run in Marlborough at the north end of South Island.

After William's death, his son Cecil managed the Kauru Hill farm from 1894 to 1911. Another son, Frederick Lawrie Teschemaker, was a Captain in the West Riding militia, but died (almost certainly of ill health) at the age of 30. The University of Notre Dame, Indiana, holds three of his journals, covering his visits to Egypt, India, Sri Lanka, China, Japan and South America.

The remaining son, Harold John Teschemaker, went to Rugby School and was initially a sheep farmer in New Zealand, probably with his father, but left New Zealand in 1900. The North Otago Times informed its readers that "Mr Harold Teschemaker, of Kauro, has acquired 10,000 acres of the best land in Argentina, and intends to leave for South America at an early date". There he bred Lincoln sheep imported from New Zealand, with great success.

⁶ [The London Gazette, May 17, 1861, page 2101](#) See also [the Bombay Artillery List of Officers](#)

Of William's daughters, perhaps Edith's experience is of most interest. In 1908 she married David Anderson, who was a Commander in the Royal Navy. He went on to become an admiral, and was then appointed Governor, first of Newfoundland in 1932 and then of New South Wales. He was knighted in London in 1936, and the couple then sailed for Australia. Unfortunately he was taken ill on the voyage, and was evacuated at Perth. He was finally sworn in as Governor, but died soon afterwards. In 1937 Lady Edith was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for her voluntary public service to the people of New South Wales. According to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald, 'she had won the admiration of the people of New South Wales for the manner in which she has relieved the Governor from many of his official engagements'. She had continued to keep some of his appointments after his death until a new Governor could be appointed.

William's uncle Tom, whom we mentioned earlier, died in Exmouth on 26 September 1853, leaving a widow Henrietta, their two sons Frederick William Teschemaker (19) and Thomas John Cornelius Teschemaker (14), as well as Henrietta's son John Cornelius Thierens II (aged 26) from her first marriage. John Cornelius Thierens II had been at Blundells School in Tiverton and at Oriel College, Oxford, where he took his M.A. In 1852 he had got married at St Peter's, Tiverton, to Caroline, the eldest daughter of the Rev. John Spurway, the Rector of Pitt, Tiverton, and they lived at Stonehouse in Plymouth. He was

appointed Provost Marshal of British Guiana, and lived there for several years. We shall return to him later.

The three remaining family members – Henrietta and her other two sons, Frederick William and Tom – sailed on the Royal Stuart, arriving in New Zealand on 4 January 1855. The brothers bought land at what was known as 7-mile peg (the peg refers to the marker indicating its 7-mile distance from central Christchurch); the area in the northern suburbs of Christchurch is now known as Belfast. However, they soon sold the land and in 1858 took up Haldon Station in the Mackenzie country, north of Lake Benmore, leaving their mother in Christchurch for the time being.

There is a vivid description online of the hazardous 17-day journey that Henrietta later made to rejoin her sons at Haldon Station, involving crossing several rivers that were in flood.⁷ There is also a family story that she sold the last of her jewellery to secure funds for the purchase of Haldon Station.

As the current owners of Haldon Station describe it: 'In the late 1850s the Dutch pioneer Thomas Teschemaker along with his brother and mother – a woman later renowned in the Mackenzie District for her kindness and good deeds – first lay claim to a 20,000 acre Run they named Haldon, after the

⁷ ['An unlikely combination? One impressive woman, a birthday coincidence and dogs', by Dr Jennie Coleman, on NZ History Search](#)

'Haldon Hills' in Exmouth, Devon, which is where the Teschemakers had last lived before coming to New Zealand. They built up the Run to 57,000 acres and stocked it with 360 ewes, 40 wethers, and 100 head of cattle from Otaio Station'.⁸ In 1868 the brothers sold Haldon Station and bought Otaio. Otaio had nearly 40,000 acres in all, stocked with 21,000 sheep.

Fred died in 1878. He had been elected a member of parliament for Gladstone, Canterbury, in 1875. Guy Scholefield, the editor of the 1940 Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, described Fred as a fine type of settler, patient and thorough in his management, but reticent and retiring in public life.

With Fred's death, Tom became the sole owner. He was one of the best loved men in Canterbury, he was simple, hearty, genuine and absolutely straight-forward. He said exactly what he thought and expected other people to treat him as he treated them. He was very fond of horses and horse racing, and was a regular judge of thoroughbreds at shows throughout Canterbury. He did not marry until he was in his 50s; his wife was Rosemary Mary Rolleston, daughter of William Rolleston who was the fourth and last Superintendent (i.e. elected head) of Canterbury Provincial Council. They had three daughters. Tom died in 1919. He, Fred and their mother Henrietta are all buried at Timaru cemetery.

⁸ ['Haldon History' on the Haldon Station website](#)

John Cornelius Thierens II, Henrietta's first son, came out to New Zealand with his family in 1879, and went to live with his half-brother Tom at Otaio. His older son, also called John Cornelius, was already in his 20's, and he helped to manage the Otaio farm.

In 1889 Caroline Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of John Cornelius II, married William Soltau Davidson. He was a Canadian of Scottish origin, but had migrated to New Zealand while still a teenager. He worked first as a shepherd, then as inspector of estates. His company was combined with another one to form the New Zealand and Australian Land Company, and he became the general manager, and continued to lead the company until his death in 1924. For most of the time he was based in Glasgow, but went on frequent visits to Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand he is considered the pioneer of refrigerated shipping, particularly of frozen meat. In 1898 he got his brother-in-law John Cornelius III to join the company, and he moved to Edinburgh.

Alice Henrietta, the youngest daughter of John Cornelius Thierens II, married George Hampton Rhodes in 1884. Her special distinction is that this was the first marriage to be solemnized in the new Christchurch Cathedral, the building which has now suffered such devastation in the 2011 earthquake.

Concluding remarks

The story described here highlights the way in which some families who had been active in the Caribbean in the days of slavery did not simply retire to a country estate in England that had been built with their fortunes acquired through slave-owning. Instead, they sometimes looked for pastures new. In the case of the Teschemakers who had made their fortune through the labours of the enslaved population working on sugar plantations in Guiana, their children were able to become prominent sheep farmers in New Zealand in the second half of the 19th century.

The Teschemaker artefacts at RAMM were received on 9 April 1869 from the family of Dr John Teschemaker of Exmouth. He had died on 20 March 1867, and the family was no doubt clearing out his personal effects. There is no evidence that Dr John Teschemaker ever lived in New Zealand himself, but it is probable that the items of New Zealand origin would have come to him via his brother Tom or through his own children, Thomas Richard, William and Charles de Vere, all of whom were in New Zealand. As we can see from the story outlined above, several members of the family had also been living in Demerara and Essequibo, which accounts for the large number of ethnographic items from that area.

Main sources

- ▶ Netherlands: [Timmerman genealogy website](#)
- ▶ Guiana: [British Guiana Colonists website](#) and the [British Guiana Genealogical Society website](#)
- ▶ UK: [Ancestry](#) and census records
- ▶ New Zealand: [the Macdonald collection](#) at Canterbury Museum

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