

Chapter 2.17

JAMES AND ANN GOFFEY

1832 - 1912



The Albert Dock, Liverpool. James will be best remembered for his activities in the shipping business, being a partner with his younger brother William in the *J & W Goffey* shipping line. On census day in April 1881 their 1200-ton barque *Melanesia* was in this dock, the crew were ashore and the ship was in the care of a nightwatchman.

Chapter 2.17. James and Ann Goffey.

James Goffey was born in Liverpool in 1832, the eldest son of James and Sarah Goffey (Chapters 2.12 and 2.13), and was baptised at the Independent Congregational Chapel in Great George Street, Liverpool, on 24th March 1833. The earliest record of him is in the 1841 census, where he appears as a nine-year-old schoolboy living with his parents and two younger brothers, Thomas and William, at 21, Newhall Street, Liverpool. In the 1851 census he is still living at 21, Newhall Street, with two more brothers, Arthur and Alfred, added to the family; the 19-year old James at this time is recorded as a baker's apprentice.

On 25th September 1854 James married Ann Maxwell Martin at the Hope Street Presbyterian Church in Liverpool, his address at that time being shown on the marriage certificate as 4, Blackburne Street, Liverpool, and his occupation as a commercial clerk. Ann, then aged 19 (according to the marriage certificate – see below), was the daughter of Thomas Martin, a bookkeeper of Stanhope Street, Toxteth Park, a location not more than 300 yards from James's old home at 21, Newhall Street. Seven years later, then aged 29, James can be found in the 1861 census living at 11, Bloom Street, Liverpool, with Ann and their two daughters, Mary Wilson aged five and Edith aged three. James's occupation at that time is again shown as a clerk. The family home in 1861 has not been found, but the birthplaces of the two younger daughters are recorded in the 1881 census as Childwall, on the outer edge of the city east of Wavertree.

In 1881 James and Ann and their family of four daughters, Mary Wilson, Edith, Bertha Jane aged 15 and Gertrude aged five were living at 44, Bagot Street, Wavertree, with James's aunt Martha Goffey, aged 71. James's brother William was living across the street at 49, Bagot Street, and the two were by this time in partnership as shipowners *J & W Goffey*, having bought their first ship, the 1155 ton Dumfriesshire in Port Glasgow in 1877.

James achieved some modest celebrity in Liverpool in his later years, one imagines partly as a result of the success of *J & W Goffey* shipowners; he deserves the title, I think, of prominent citizen. A brief biography of him can be seen in the book *Contemporary Biographies: Liverpool and Birkenhead* by T.W.Pike where his entry is entitled *Colonel James Goffey, V.D., J.P.* The impressive title of Colonel was gained by successive promotions in the 6th Liverpool Volunteer Artillery, a branch of the British Army in which he served for so long that he was awarded the Volunteer Decoration (V.D.) for long service. Joining the Liverpool Volunteers as a gunner in 1865, he was commissioned in 1866, became a Captain in 1867, a Major in 1880, a Colonel in 1890 and became Honorary Colonel when he retired in 1892 at the age of 60. He became a Justice of the Peace in Liverpool in 1892 and was President of Liverpool Library in 1890, 1891 and 1900 and Hon. Secretary of Liverpool Geographical Society in 1906. Among James's more business-orientated activities were as Chairman of the Liverpool Shipowners' Association, director of the Mersey Mutual Underwriting Association, the British Marine Mutual, the Central Marine Insurance Association and the United Kingdom Small Damage Association.

James died at the age of 80 at his home, 94 Hartington Road, Sefton Park, Liverpool, on 24th April 1912. According to obituaries in the local press Ann had predeceased him by a few weeks and James had not been his usual self since her death. Records at the P.R.O. show Ann's date of death as 12th February 1912, some 9 – 10 weeks before James, aged 74. However High Court Probate Office records show that Ann died eight months after James, on 12 December 1912, at the age of 75; on this basis she would have been born in 1837 and would therefore have been aged 17, not 19, on her marriage in 1854. Either she overstated her age on her marriage certificate, or she understated her age in her later years – neither practice being unknown. High Court Probate

records shows James's occupation at the time of his death as Forwarding Agent and his estate valued at £11,062 17s 9d. The beneficiaries were his two eldest daughters, Mary Wilson and Edith, both at that time spinsters living in North Wales. Why his two younger daughters were not mentioned is not clear. The omission of Ann from the list of beneficiaries suggests that she had in fact predeceased her husband, in which case the High Court Probate records are incorrect; this is not an unknown occurrence, it can be seen in other cases, particularly with their daughter Mary Wilson Goffey.

The death of James was widely reported in the local press and these reports are a valuable source of information, being generally potted histories of his business and community activities. The Liverpool Courier of 26th April 1912 refers to the "*shipowning and ship-broking business of Messrs. J & W Goffey of 28, Chapel Street, Liverpool*", quotes James's membership of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, of which he was vice-president for two years and makes some play of the fact that the 80 year-old James had attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting on the Wednesday before he died. He also represented the Chamber of Commerce on the management committee of the City of Liverpool School of Commerce (Liverpool University). James was at one time chairman of the Liverpool Shipowners Association and was acting as that organisation's representative in the Chamber of Commerce when he died.

In 1899 he was elected chairman of the Liverpool Local Marine Board, and he represented the Shipowners Association on the joint committee of the Liverpool Shipowners and Liverpool Steamship Owners Associations. He also represented the Shipowners Association on the management committee of the Liverpool School of Tropical Diseases (probably appropriate considering the unfortunate fate of his father in Calabar), the Nautical Instruction Sub-committee of Liverpool City Council, the council of the Chamber of Shipping and the Shipowners' Parliamentary Committee.

The Council of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce convened a special meeting on 26th April 1912 to pass a resolution of condolence on James's relatives. This meeting is reported in detail in the *Liverpool Daily Post* of April 27th and goes into some detail of the meeting. Proposed by Mr. R. D. Bateson, presiding, the resolution was passed by all members standing in silence :-

"That this meeting of Council of the Incorporated Chamber of Commerce of Liverpool hereby express their sincere grief at the death of their colleague Colonel Goffey who was a member of the Council for 14 years as the representative of the Liverpool Shipowners Association during which time he was Chairman of the General Trade Committee for eight years, vice-President of the Chamber for two years and a member of the Executive Committee of the Council for five years; also their deep appreciation of the services which he so ungrudgingly upon all occasions rendered to this city. The Council further desire to express their heartfelt sympathy with Miss Goffey and other relatives in their irreparable loss."

Several members are recorded as supporting the resolution or as having added their own short tributes; Lord Derby is recorded as having been unavoidably absent but having expressed a wish to be associated with the resolution. It is not clear which Miss Goffey the Chamber of Commerce resolution refers to, since all four daughters were still alive in 1912. Mary Wilson and Edith were both living in Llandudno at the time; they were the beneficiaries of the wills of both their mother and father. Strangely they both died within three months of each other in the autumn of 1919. In each case the two younger sisters, Bertha Jane and Gertrude, also both spinsters, were the named beneficiaries of their elder sisters' wills.