

Taking a Chance in Australia; Heartbreak at Home

In the spring of 1851 gold had been discovered in New South Wales, Australia. Then in the fall rich, shallow deposits were found in Victoria in eastern Australia, and the gold rush eventually centered on Mount Alexander in that province. Lowell Watson has more details of James' trip.

About this time there was a "Gold Rush" in Australia and some of the men were going in search of gold. Sutherland decided to leave his family and see for himself. If he was successful his family could come later. In 1852 he started on the voyage to that far off country. It took him four months to make the journey on the water. He finally arrived in Melbourne, Australia.

While he was in Australia a large fire broke out in Fredericton, seventy buildings burned to the ground. This included all of James Sutherland's holdings. It was a total loss, as there was no insurance at the time.

He stayed in the Australian gold fields nearly two years.

In his letter James wonders if Hannah's move to Fredericton was wise. Likely he had left his family in Burton Township. Perhaps her older brother, William G. Stephenson, had moved to that city—he was there in 1861—and Hannah and her children followed. Fredericton with all its shipping and business was an exciting place to be, and Hannah may also have wanted her children to attend school in this city. On September 26, 1853 the infant Pamela and two-year old Colin Stephenson Sutherland were baptized at the Wilmot United Church in Fredericton.

A happy event took place October 27, 1853. Hannah's youngest brother, Reuben Richard Stephenson, married Phebe Jane Cromwell of Mauderville. Apparently Hannah was fond of her sister-in-law because she used the name spelled the same way for a daughter born seven years later. But Hannah may not have attended this happy occasion. Just a week earlier, October 20, 1853, Pamela Elizabeth had died. The *New Brunswick Reporter* said she was the youngest daughter of James Sutherland, age 8 months. (Thus she was born in February of that year.)

On November 25, Hannah received a notice from a banker that the money James sent has arrived and is available for her. It is 15 oz of gold dust worth £ 58 · 4 · 5. Various charges reduce this to £ 53 · 13 · 7 worth £ 65 · 3 · 5 in the currency of New Brunswick. This is a second notice. Why hasn't she respond? Why hasn't she withdraw the money and placed it in a "small safe bank" as James suggested? She is shocked and grieving over little Pamela who had died just a month earlier.

Before long, however, Hannah begins looking to the future. The record of charges she made at the Connor store in Fredericton has been kept.* It shows her making a few purchases in November and December as if attempting to make Christmas pleasant for her children.

Then in January the family is visited by a second sorrow! The *Fredericton Weekly Chronical* reports the death of "Zeresh Vashti, fourth daughter of James Sutherland, age 5" on January 12, 1854. Two small daughters dead within a short time.²⁶ Hannah's purchases at the store come to a virtual halt for many weeks. Then, as if determined to dress her daughters

* Alberta Caswell Schneider has a bill for purchases made by Hannah from December 1853 to April 8, 1855.

²⁶ The obituary for the oldest daughter of Rebecca, Hannah Rebecca, says she was the oldest of 11 children. *Stevens Point Journal*, Dec. 1933. The two dying in infancy and eight surviving children account for 10.