



Richard Jamieson was born in 1860 at Galashiels, Scotland, a centre of the woollen industry.

He moved to New Zealand in 1881 when he turned 21, settling briefly in Oamaru. It was here that he met his wife, Lillias Bruce, who was from a flour-milling family, and they married in 1884.

The couple soon moved to Dunedin and by 1893 were living at Harbour Terrace, West Harbour, while Richard worked briefly at Mosgiel Woollen Company. Richard and Lillias were to have eight children of whom only six survived. Three sons, James, Richard and George Bruce, and three daughters Margaret Smith, Silvia, and Rachel Alma.

Stone's Otago Southland Directory for 1893 shows R. Jamieson & Co, Octagon, Drapers – Wholesale and Warehousemen. His initial warehouse was located where today the foyer of the Regent Theatre is located. The firm specialised in supplying tailors with all they needed to make clothes to order, from cloth to needles. He imported bolts of cloth from his contacts in Galashiels, and other supplies from the best source he could find. Stone's Directory lists 107 Tailors Hosiers and Outfitters, a large market.

In 1905 he purchased a large 20 roomed house, "Inglenook", on a large property in Drivers Road, bounded by Baxter Street, Grendon Street and Drivers Road, from which he used to walk to work each day.

In 1910 Richard built Jamieson's Building 482 Moray Place (now Bracken Court), and moved the business there. He next bought the building next door Bell Hill Chambers as an investment.

Soon he opened branches in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, which with Dunedin employed around 14 staff total.

In 1911 Richard formed a limited liability company, R. Jamieson & Co Ltd, made up of family investors as shareholders.

Over the years of prosperity he invested in a wide range of income earning properties. With his wife being from a flour-milling family, he bought The Glenpark Flour milling Company at Glenpark, North Otago, a farm at Stoneburn, Dunback, for son Richard, and various other properties in the Shag Valley, had an interest in a woollen mill in Napier, owned a house property in Oamaru, and owned a commercial property in Stuart Street tenanted to Turnbull & Jones Ltd.

Daughter Margaret Jamieson married William McCaig and William was appointed Governing Director when Richard Jamieson died in 1937 leaving a complicated 10 page will.

Richard left considerable sums to his family, down to nephews and nieces, and various charities - The Maori Hill Presbyterian Church 1,000, Maori Hill Presbyterian Foreign Mission 100, The Home Mission of the Presbyterian Church 1,000, the Presbyterian Social Service Association 2,000, the Salvation Army 1,000, The Otago Presbyterian Boys' College Board of governors Incorporated (John McGlashan College) 1,000.

His net assets at date of death are recorded at a considerable sum – 163,525, but Death Duties demanded 44,450 to be found in cash.

William McCaig's son John McCaig joined the firm after he returned from the war in 1946, and took over as Managing Director in 1957.

But change was in the wind. The bespoke tailor had become a dying breed, killed off by the mass manufacture of men's clothing. Import licensing had been good to Jamiesons but that was removed and manufacturers began to import their own materials direct.

Eventually, in December 1983, the business closed and the shares of the company were sold.

Richard Jamieson was a private man and did not take a great part in the affairs of the community. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge, was a staunch Presbyterian, and was an office-bearer of the Presbyterian Church in Maori Hill.

Around 1919 with congregation outgrowing the earlier church in Sim Street, the present church was planned but the tender cost exceeded the funds available.

Jamieson kindly offered debentures of 3,500 which was enough to galvanise the congregation into finding the balance needed, and the new church was opened in 1922. In 1928 funds were needed for a new organ and Jamieson provided the 2,000 needed as a gift.

Richard Jamieson, his wife Lillas, two of their young children, Lillas Tina and Millie, daughter Silvia (Potter) and various McCaig family members, are all interred in the family grave in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery.

Prepared for the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (www.cemeteries.org.nz) by Stewart Harvey from information supplied by John McCaig of Dunedin.