



Three generations of Laurensens ran their family bakery business and contributed to Dunedin life for more than a century. James Gifford Laurensen was born in the Shetland Islands, the son of Gifford Laurensen, a carpenter, and Margaret, nee Tait. The family came to Dunedin in the 1870s, where, after being a carter, James Gifford began a bakery in a small shop on the corner of Highgate and City Road. He was president of the Master Bakers' Association for many years, a director of the Kaikorai Tramway Co and an elder of Knox Church.

He married Ann MacDonald in 1889 and their only child, Gifford Alexander Laurensen was born in 1889. After being educated at Kaikorai School and Waitaki Boys' High School, he joined his father in the bakery business, now called J.G.Laurensen & Son. He was a member of the Otago Hussars, and during World War 1 served with the 1st Field Company of the NZ Engineers. He married Winifred Jane Whyte in 1920. After his father's death, he took over the company and became one of Otago's leading bakers. He was president of both the Dunedin and NZ Master Bakers' Associations. He also took part in many local associations and community organisations, and, like his father, was an elder of Knox Church and a director of the Kaikorai Tram Co. He died on 30 January 1946, survived by three children, and is buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery.

For five years the children lived in England while the company was run by trustees. The eldest daughter, Ethel Ann, married and stayed there. The younger two, Alexia Jane Gifford Laurensen, and James Gifford Laurensen, after learning more about the bakery trade in England, returned to be

involved with Laurensons all their lives. Jim Laurensen ran the firm from his mid-20s, also remaining involved in day-to-day jobs, such as driving delivery vans when needed. Alexia was a director and took a keen interest in office administration, dealing with customers and orders. During their time Laurensons became one of the three largest bakeries in Otago and a large employer of labour, but retained its family atmosphere.

Like their father and grandfather, Jim and Lexie were active in Knox Church, and began a custom of presenting large Laurensen loaves as the centre-piece of Harvest Festival at Knox and other churches around Dunedin. Jim and Alexia both died of cancer and their ashes are interred in Dunedin's Andersons bay Cemetery. Jim died on 22 February 1984, and Alexia on 2 March 1989. Their estates, of over a million dollars, were left to the Otago Medical Research Foundation, to be used particularly for research into how diet affects health.