



Michael Donaghy arrived in Geelong in 1852 and began a small business making hand-laid ropes. With the strong demand for rope for shipping he was soon joined in business by his two sons, John

and Michael junior. Dunedin and Melbourne were great trade and shipping centres in these days and in 1878 Michael junior was sent to Dunedin to manage a small ropeworks on a site bordering Bathgate Park and Macandrew Road. Despite its solid beginnings business was not good so the Donaghy family sold to a Dunedin partnership, two of whom were prominent businessmen – William Royse, merchant, and Alfred Lee Smith. A third businessman, Benjamin Throp, had a smaller share.

The Passmore brothers bought into M. Donaghy & Co in 1884. James Passmore and his seven sons were all involved with rope-making. On their arrival in Dunedin from Scotland in 1873 they had founded a ropewalk at Whare Flat, having been encouraged to do so by the local schoolmaster. This gentleman, hearing that a family of ropemakers had newly arrived, walked all the way from the Taieri Plain to Port Chalmers with the purpose of persuading them to settle at Whare Flat. At that time there were several profitable steam-driven flax mills on the Taieri supplied with *phormium tenax* [flax] from the surrounding district.

Joseph and James Linster, the two eldest Passmore brothers, had begun a Burnside ropeworks in 1881, probably having moved from Whare Flat when the area was declared a water reserve for Dunedin City.

Combining the business acumen of the owners of Donaghys, Alfred Lee Smith and William Royse, with the technical expertise of the Passmore family proved to be a winning combination. It marked the beginning of a long association between Donaghys and the Passmore family. Over the years all of the seven brothers served with the company for some time, and many of their sons followed in their footsteps.

In 1889 the company was registered as a public company, with Alfred Lee Smith as the first chairman, and Joseph, James Linster and John Passmore as directors. In 1894, with the death of his brother Joseph, James Linster became the manager of the company. He was a forceful figure who managed the works with a considerable amount of style. His home in Halfway Bush was in those days a country house, and he arrived every morning at the factory in his horse and gig, which always caused a flurry of excitement. Later he was one of Dunedin's early motorists. Although he was a hard taskmaster, he was also an extremely able general manager, and under his direction M. Donaghy & Co Ltd prospered.

Shareholder discontent arose in 1906 and the upshot was that Lee Smith and James L Passmore resigned from the company. However these goings-on did not affect the workers too much and they maintained a great spirit and unity. These were the days of grand staff picnics, all staff taken to the picnic spot by horse and dray, where they were well fed and watered.

Joseph Passmore died on 22 June 1894 aged 40 and is buried in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery.

James Passmore, the father, died on 28 September 1896 and is buried in Dunedin's Southern cemetery, with the magnificent memorial shown above being somewhat vandalised unfortunately.

James Linster Passmore died on 17 April 1918 and is buried in Dunedin's Andersons Bay cemetery.

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