



Thomas West is believed to have been born in Waterford, England, around 1843.

In the Otago-Southland Commercial Directory for the years 1876 to 1920 he is listed as a 'storekeeper' resident in Dunedin. West opened a grocery store in Maclaggan Street, next door to the Wright Stephenson SaleYards building, where he and his wife, Elizabeth, traded as "The Cheap Store". Their two sons, Walter John, and Charles Henry later helped in the store. Thomas West had a brother Walter who owned a butcher shop in Walker Street [now Carrol Street] but the brothers do not seem to have ever joined forces in the retail scene.

When Tom West began making ginger beer his wife ran the store on her own. The ginger beer became very popular but West never made or brewed any beer, ale, or stout in his store or factory. His ginger beer had real beer mixed with it. West was buying hogsheads of 'old beer' and mixed it with his ginger beer – three quarters ginger beer and one quarter beer. To brew beer under the law at the time the store would have had to become a 'brewery' with all the regulation and control that implied. West saw that the existing breweries were pouring away their old beer as they were not allowed to use it for any other purpose.

Tom's two sons, Walter and Charles moved the ginger beer operation into the old Lane's Aerated water factory which was adjacent to their store in Maclaggan Street but accessed off Clark Street. They seem to have utilised the old Lane's plant to also bottle cordials.

After World War 1 The West brothers moved to a new factory on the corner of Moreau Street and Bay View Road, St Kilda, where they traded as T. West &Co. Since then the business has gone through many changes of ownership but still operates from these premises. West's 'Pineapple and Pear' cordial has had an extremely popular and long life, still being marketed today.

Thomas and Elizabeth also had three daughters – Maude Isabella, Annie Georgina and Agnes.

Thomas died on 22 October 1916 and Elizabeth died on 7 November 1919. Both are buried in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery in a large family plot.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand [www.cemeteries.org.nz] from scraps of information held by the present owners of the business, and archive investigation. Very little is written about the family or its business so it is difficult to vouch for the historical accuracy of the information obtainable today.