

## Who was the Rebecca NICHOLS who married Alexander Henry BLAYNEY?

You may have seen this on the family tree on-line<sup>1</sup>:

**Rebecca (Beckie) Nichols born Q1 1865 (Hackney, England), recently changed to born 5<sup>th</sup> December 1864 (South Hackney) living as "niece" with Henry (Alexander) and his mother Rebecca at the 1881 Census.**

I had assumed this Rebecca was the niece of Thomas Nichols (a lodger with the Blayneys in 1861 Census). She went on to marry Alexander Henry Blayney in 1893, probably on shipboard on their emigration from the UK as there is no record in UK or NZ of this marriage.

I had also assumed that the reason Alex and Rebecca (my Great Grandparents) left for New Zealand as singles and arrived as a married couple was because Beckie was pregnant [Emmigrated in 1893 and my great uncle Frank was born 5th May 1893], and perhaps also embarrassed by the 22 year age gap, which they apparently kept fairly quiet about once in New Zealand. Also there was no need to stay after Alex's mother [Rebecca Blayney née Lambert (born 1804)] had passed away in 1889.

**However, the evidence now clearly points to Rebecca Nichols being the daughter of Thomas Nichols and so is correctly shown as the niece of the "head of house" namely Henry Alexander Blayney [a.k.a. Alexander Henry], in the 1861 Census.**

Researcher Sarah Callen<sup>2</sup>, another descendant of Thomas Blayney (1754-1819) and Priscilla Charlotte Sargeant (1775-1841) of London, has discovered some interesting details about Rebecca McCarthey (née Blayney), an older sister of Alexander Blayney.

Sarah found that Rebecca Blayney (listed as Rebecca Blaney) sailed as an Assisted Immigrant to Australia in 1857 on the *Admiral Lyons* arriving 15<sup>th</sup> September<sup>3</sup>, where at age 26 she married John McCarthey on 26th Dec 1859 (St. Peter's Eastern Hill Victoria, Australia)<sup>4</sup>, but left him after six months, returning alone to London in 1860 [departing Victoria, Australia June 1860 on the *Dover Castle*]. She was at the Blayney home in the 1861 Census, which also recorded a lodger, one Thomas Nichols. Rebecca then lived next-door to the family home and on the 7th Feb 1864 she married said lodger Thomas Nichols<sup>5</sup>. However back in Australia, John didn't die until 1867, so if Rebecca hadn't divorced him, it looks like a spot of bigamy, even if she changed the spelling to McCarthey!

Thomas and Rebecca Nichols (ex-McCarthey née Blayney) went on to have two children, Rebecca and Harriet in 1864 and 1866 respectively. Rebecca Nichols was baptised on January 1 1865, at St John of Jerusalem, South Hackney. Her baptism certificate lists her parents as Thomas and Rebecca Nichols ~~Blayney~~. The Blayney (crossed out) is consistent with the fact that Rebecca Nichols was a Blayney (before McCarthey).

Sarah has now obtained the Birth Certificate<sup>6</sup> of Rebecca Nichols born 5<sup>th</sup> Dec 1864, South Hackney confirming her father as Thomas Nichols mother was born Rebecca Blayney (see below)....

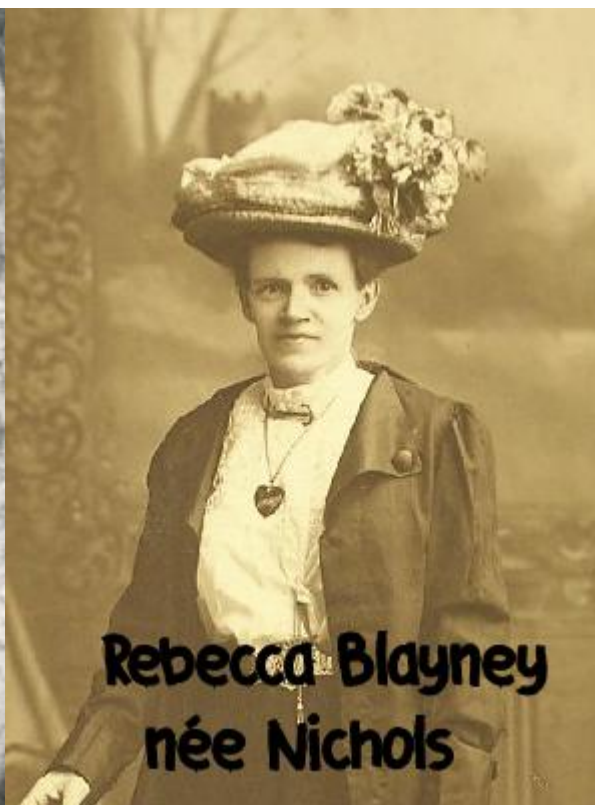
Superintendent Registrar's District <i>Hackney</i>										
Registrar's District <i>South Hackney</i>										
1865. BIRTHS in the District of <i>South Hackney</i> in the County of <i>Middlesex</i>										
No.	When Born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother	Rank or Profession of Father	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar	Baptismal Name if added after Registration of Birth
56	<i>Fifth December 1864</i> <i>11 Pleasant Place</i>	<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>girl</i>	<i>Thomas Nichols</i>	<i>Rebecca Nichols formerly Blayney</i>	<i>Carman</i>	<i>The mark of Rebecca Nichols mother 11 Pleasant Place South Hackney</i>	<i>Sixteenth January 1865</i>	<i>Richard Stib Registrar</i>	

### So we have three REBECCA Blayneys:

1. **Rebecca(1)** = Rebecca Blayney née Lambert (1804-1889), wife of Thomas Blayney (1896-1854)
2. **Rebecca(2)** = Rebecca Nichols ex McCarthy née Blayney (b.1833), wife of John McCarthy then Thomas Nichols, daughter of Rebecca(1) and sister of Alexander H Blayney and
3. **Rebecca(3)** = Rebecca Blayney née Nichols (1864-1948), wife of Alexander H Blayney and daughter of Rebecca(2).

Something appears to have happened, possibly the failing health of the widowed Rebecca(1), resulting in Rebecca(3) going to live at the Blayney home with Rebecca(1) and her son Alexander Blayney, perhaps doing domestic and care duties while Alex was out at work. She is recorded there in the 1881 Census as a niece.

I had already noted an amazing similarity between the photo of Rebecca(2) McCarthy [on the left below] and Rebecca(3) Blayney (the wife of Alexander) [on the right] and this adds to the evidence that Rebecca(3) was the daughter of Rebecca(2).



The picture of Rebecca(2) McCarthey has written on the back (in Muriel Blayney's handwriting) - "Mother of Thomas Athol Blayney and Frank Blayney" so my mother also saw the close resemblance. I had considered the possibility that both photos were of Rebecca(3) but Rebecca(3) on the right has a left eye higher than her right, not seen in the Rebecca(2) photo on the left, so short of facial recognition telling me otherwise, they are different people.

So it would appear that Rebecca(3) Nichols became pregnant (presumably to Alex) and as she was his niece, they clearly had to emigrate unmarried and arrive in NZ married or face the potentially serious legal and social consequences this liaison would cause in Victorian London. Once in New Zealand, no one knew they were niece and uncle and they went on to have Frank and then (my Grandad) Tom.

We all have skeletons in the cupboard and with improving information technology it may take less than three generations to have these exposed! From a medical perspective, knowing there had been some consanguinity might explain any genetic problems that might arise, although I am not aware of any genetic issues.

The consanguinity hasn't prevented many NZ Blayney descendants of Alex becoming high achievers, including; two PhDs; a University Assoc. Professor, the Head of NZ Diplomatic Protection Service, and many professionals [including teachers, scientists (chemist, ecologist, geologist, microbiologist), health professionals (GP, radiographer, audiologist, psychologist), an engineer, an accountant, a computer systems engineer, a Bank Manager, a librarian and a draughtswoman) and the odd millionaire.

Dr Keith T Blayney Feb 2021

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- 1 <http://www.keithblayney.com/Blayney/ThomasNZ.htm>
  - 2 <http://www.keithblayney.com/Blayney/Bibliography.html#1326>
  - 3 <http://www.keithblayney.com/Blayney/Bibliography.html#1327>
  - 4 <http://www.keithblayney.com/Blayney/Bibliography.html#1328>
  - 5 <http://www.keithblayney.com/Blayney/Bibliography.html#1329>
  - 6 <http://www.keithblayney.com/Blayney/RebeccaNicholsBCert1864.png>