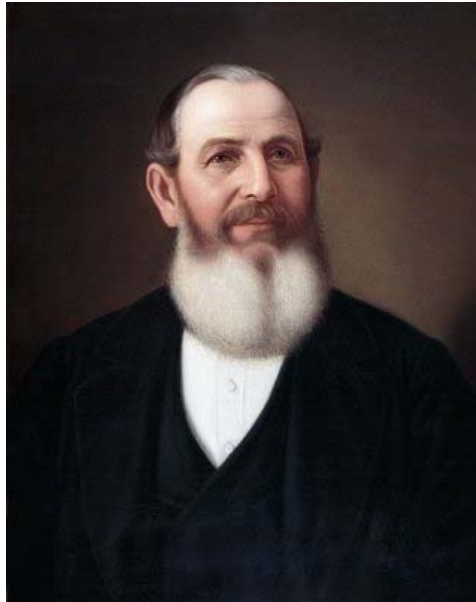


## HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



### **JAMES DILWORTH (1815-1994)**

#### **Founder, the Dilworth School, Auckland**

James Dilworth, the son of Mary Bell and her husband, John Dilworth, a farmer, was born at Donaghmore, County Tyrone, on 15 August 1815. After a sound education at the nearby Royal Dungannon School, James worked first on his father's farm and then in an Irish bank.

Probably in 1839 James emigrated to New South Wales, then in 1841 he sailed to New Zealand. After a brief period exploring prospects at a number of settlements, he settled in Auckland as accountant to the New Zealand Banking Company in Princes Street.

Overdue bills ultimately forced the bank to wind up in 1845. This did not deter Dilworth. Equipped with capital (presumably from his family) he had already turned to land buying. Late in 1842 he had bought six acres of Parnell land on which he put a house, and in 1845 bought nearly 100 acres at Takapuna. In 1844 he had acquired more than 150 acres between Mt St John and Mt Hobson. Setting himself up as a farmer he continued to add to this estate, which became in time the most valuable of all the farms in this vicinity. He also acquired properties in the township and throughout the Auckland province. He was the most astute of land buyers.

In the 1860s Dilworth prospered. With the continued growth of Auckland's population his suburban farm, three miles from town, shot up remarkably in value. He also had two strokes of luck: the outbreak of the New Zealand wars led to valuable commissariat contracts, and the government decision to run the tracks of the trunk railway through his estate put generous compensation money into his pocket. In 1882 his properties were estimated to be worth £81,044.

On 12 July 1853 James married Isabella Hall of Otahuhu, originally from Ulster. Their marriage was a happy one, although childless.

Dilworth had an impressive record of public service. He was for 27 years from its opening in 1847 a trustee of the Auckland Savings Bank. He served on the Auckland Provincial Council for eight years. Public causes he supported included the kindergarten movement and the YMCA. Education was close to his heart, and he was a member of the Auckland University College council for the last four years of his life.

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In his will Dilworth left the bulk of the estate to the Dilworth Ulster Institute Trust whose mission was to set up an institute (or school) to take in and educate boys living in straitened circumstances.

Dilworth died at Remuera on 23 December 1894. His estate was valued at £150,000. His monument is Dilworth School. In less than a century it grew to be one of New Zealand's largest boarding schools. The Dilworth Trust Board is one of New Zealand's largest charities and provides the funding to support the Dilworth School. The original endowment of £100,000 left in Dilworth's will has been invested wisely since then and the Trust now holds approximately \$400 million in assets and cash.

The beneficiaries of this trust are the boys who attend the School. The Board are precluded from assisting any other cause, however worthy it may be, and so this leads to a much focused Board and staff.

The school opened in 1906 with eight boys and for the first 21 years offered primary education only. Secondary boys at that time boarded at the school but attended Auckland Grammar School during the day. The original school buildings were Dilworth's old farm homestead and outbuildings. Classrooms and other buildings were added later.

A secondary department was built in 1931. A major expansion started in 1956, the 50th anniversary, with the foundation stone being laid for St Patrick's Chapel. The total roll when that phase of the expansion was completed some five years later was 300.

The next major jump in numbers was in 1993 when the present Junior Campus was built to accommodate 192 boys. This brought the total roll of both campuses to 510 covering Year 5 to Year 13.

Dilworth has four Houses representing places and counties in Ireland - Tyrone, Dungannon, Donegal and Armagh.

**Patrick Devlin**