

# John HAMILTON

Date of Birth ( <i>Baptism</i> )	c1805
Place of Birth ( <i>From</i> )	Glasgow
Role on Ship	Second Cabin Passenger
Journey Outcome	Lost

## Notes:

John Hamilton was a native of Glasgow, born in 1805, who dedicated much of his life to both the industry and the spiritual community of his home city. On April 1, 1827, he married Jean McKirdy, who was born in Largs in 1804. Together they raised a large family, though they also faced the early loss of several children, all of whom died before the family's planned emigration. For thirty years, John was a cornerstone of the vast St. Rollox Chemical Works owned by Messrs Tennant, where he served as a manager of one of its primary departments. Although often described by the press as a merchant, he was known professionally as a chemist. His departure from the firm was met with deep regret, and the principal, John Tennant, Esq., personally presented him with £200 as a mark of high esteem for his long and faithful service, along with an additional £20 to provide extra comforts for his family's voyage.

John's spiritual life was equally distinguished; he was a member of the Congregational Church on Great Hamilton Street from its very formation, serving as a deacon under the Rev. D. Johnstone. He was particularly committed to the religious education of the youth, acting as the superintendent of the Sabbath schools and frequently awarding prizes to children to encourage their acquisition of scriptural knowledge. In 1854, he presided over the South-Eastern District Sabbath School Union. His generosity was well known; just eighteen months before his departure, he contributed £50 to the building fund for the church's new chapel, and upon leaving, both he and Jean were presented with tokens of esteem from the congregation.

The decision to emigrate was driven by a desire to reunite with their daughter, Mary, in Auckland, New Zealand. In early February 1856, John, Jean, and their sons Robert and Alexander boarded the Josephine Willis at the St. Katherine Docks. They were joined by Samuel Hamilton—variously described as a schoolmaster and a Wesleyan Missionary—and his family. John wrote to his pastor before sailing that he looked forward to the voyage with pleasure, specifically because the presence of the missionary family ensured they would have preaching on board.

On Sunday, February 3, at 5:00 PM, the pilot left the ship, and John took the opportunity to send a few final lines to his surviving son, James, in Glasgow. In this last letter, he noted that everyone was doing well, though Jean was feeling a little seasick. Tragically, just two and a half hours later, at half-past seven, the steamer Mangerton struck the Josephine Willis midships—the exact location of the Hamilton family's berth. It is believed they were killed instantly by the collision. A survivor recalled seeing John and the missionary going below deck roughly thirty minutes before the catastrophe, likely to engage in their final family worship of the Sabbath before the ship was "launched into eternity".

While the bodies of the Hamilton family were never recovered, their legacy remained through their two remaining children.

- Their eldest son, James Hamilton, remained in Scotland with a large family of his own, He was a celebrated architect responsible for many of Glasgow's landmarks, including the monuments in the Glasgow Necropolis and Shawlands Academy.
- Their daughter Mary married James Walker in Glasgow, emigrating to New Zealand around about 1853. They had ten children, the first born in Glasgow and the rest born in the colony, Their son, John Hamilton Walker, named after Mary's father, was born in Auckland at the end of March 1856. They cannot have known at that time about the loss of

her parents and brothers in the tragedy of the wreck. Descendants of her family now thrive around the world.