



Suffrage stories

Jane Takotowi Cochrane was the daughter of Te Whata, a Rangatira of Mangamuka and Northland trader Dennis Cochrane. She grew to be an accomplished young woman who operated confidently in both Māori and Pākehā society.

At 17, Jane married James Clendon, a prominent English settler and local politician who was 40 years her senior. Widowed at 34, with eight children under 17 years old, Jane was confronted with the fact that while the house was insured for a few hundred pounds, James was thousands of pounds in debt.

Her home and a decent future for her children were threatened. Jane set about using her standing in both Māori and Pākehā communities, and knowledge of commerce and relationships to pay the debts and educate her children, all whilst remaining in their family home.

Jane was unrelenting in her efforts. She paid some debts with small amounts of land and cash. She wrote persuasive letters to her creditors. She traded in gum, bark, firewood and garden produce – anything that would enable her to stay in her house. Amazingly, she managed to clear the debt and lived in the house until she died in 1919 at the age of 81.

Jane Takotowi Cochrane

1838-1919



*Mr Manning can you venture
to yourself my sorrow & dismay
when I reflect on the uncertainty
& the probability of my poor
& very little children being
left homeless or at the mercy
of their not-over good relatives
from whom they will receive but
little or no cheer & in fact who
regard their existence in this
world at the same time as them-
selves a most unpardonable offence
as obstacles or objects on their
bosom as I have most bitterly
now experienced, may I venture
to hope you will grant me an
interview at Orokai & if you
will not object in presence of*

■ TOP: Jane Clendon, 1856-1872. Credit: Clendon House collection, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. ABOVE: Excerpt of letter from Jane Clendon to Judge Frederick Maning, local magistrate, 16 July 1875. In this excerpt, Jane seeks to persuade Maning of the risk of her 'poor and very little children being left homeless' and asks him for an interview to solicit a loan for the mortgage on her property at Clendon. Credit: Clendon Papers, Clendon House, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.



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