



Emma Rusbatch

1866-1946

Suffrage stories

Emma Goodson was born in West Tamar, Tasmania. Her parents sailed with their 11 children to New Zealand in 1873 and settled in Ōamaru. Emma married William Rusbatch in 1884. She signed sheet 298 of the 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition, but there is no evidence as to why she decided to sign.

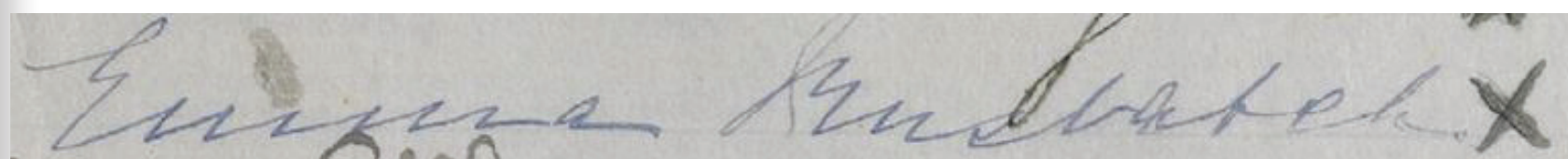
In 1894, Emma's husband William died of typhoid fever and a severe nose bleed. Emma was left with four boys, and pregnant with a fifth son. To earn a living for her family, Emma took in washing for local businessmen. She was noted for her skill in laundering stiff white shirt fronts and collars. Not an easy task when her only tools were the washboard and tub, plenty of elbow grease and irons heated on a coal range.

In 1912, Emma re-married Sampson Carlyon. Sampson had been previously married to her eldest sister, Mary Ann, who had died in 1909. Mary Ann and Sampson had six children. After Emma's re-marriage, the couple had a blended family of eleven children.

Emma's story reminds us of the sheer hard work required of many New Zealand women, in raising and keeping a large family. Gaining the vote was recognition of their key role in New Zealand society.



WASHING DAY IN MIDSUMMER IN THE FAR NORTH, AUCKLAND, N.Z.



■ TOP: Women doing weekly washing in the far north, using hand powered washing machine and washboard, 1904. Credit: AWNS-19041215-15-2, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Libraries.

ABOVE: Emma Rusbatch's signature. Credit: 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition, sheet 298.



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