

CATHERINE "KATE" CLAY

aka **Kate Henry**

Largely associated with her husband Harry Clay, Catherine Clay started performing in the early 1890s as Kate Henry and later toured with the same minstrel troupes - notably Walshe's Novelty Co, the Continental Vaudeville Co (1898, 1899) and the Australian Eleven (1899-1900) before helping establish Clay's Waxworks and Vaudeville Co in 1900. She retired in 1905 after having appeared on each of the annual Queensland tours (billed as either Kate Henry or Kate Clay).

Little is currently known about Catherine Clay's life and stage career, and indeed she believed to have only performed with the minstrel troupes that Harry Clay was involved with between 1893 and 1905. While reviews of her performances do not hold much information concerning her talents or reception with audiences, it seems that she was a reasonably good contralto singer and played her parts in the farces effectively. Of her early life all we know is that she was born at Glebe (Sydney) on 28 June 1869, the eldest daughter of Thomas and Mary Ann Jubb (1844-96). Her younger siblings were William J. (1872-), Thomas (1874 -1946), Florence (1876-), Penelope (1881-), Elizabeth (1888 -). She and Harry Clay were married in Glebe in 1887, and the following year the couple gave birth to their only child, Essie.

Kate Clay's first established stage engagement was in 1892 when she and her husband appeared with Walshe's Novelty Company at the Sydney School of Arts. Billed as a singer she also featured in many of the minstrel farces, including the role of Mrs Souderwatta in the farce "The Foiled Mashers." Her earliest known song was "Will You Ever Think of Me?" A January 1893 review briefly refers to her performance, noting: "The programme proved to be one of the best of the season, and in the first part Miss Kate Clay was cordially applauded for her excellent rendering of the ballad 'Old Home'" (SMH: 16 Jan. 1893, 6).

Following the end of the Sydney season, the Clay's travelled to Brisbane with the Novelty Company for a four weeks engagement at the Gaiety Theatre. The intended four weeks season, which began on 28 January, was forced to temporarily close down after only one week when a flood hit the city on 4 February. Although Walshe re-opened at the Gaiety on 11 February he was forced to abandon the Brisbane season altogether after a week due to the extensive infrastructure damage to the city.

Kate Clay's next recorded appearance was again at Brisbane's Gaiety Theatre, this time with Warren's Surprise Party in 1895 (31 Aug. -) Other artists included Maud and Rose Fanning, William A. Ball, Will Wallace and Wal Rockley. On 11 September W.A. Ball took over the management of the company, renaming it the Gaiety Surprise Party. Although the season ended on 1 October, the Clays remained in Brisbane until at least 5 October, on which night they took part in a benefit for Helen Gordon (Gaiety Theatre).

SCHOOL OF ARTS.
 Lease and Manager RALPH WALSH.
 Stage Manager HARRY CLAY.

WALSHE'S NOVELTY COMPANY.
GRAND OPENING NIGHT,
SATURDAY NEXT, DECEMBER 24, 1892.
ARTISTIC MERIT ALWAYS WINS.
THE BOOM OF BOOMS.
 The Greatest Combination of Specialty Artists ever Organised.

Our Beautiful and Original First Part,
THE SQUATTER'S HOMESTEAD.
 Special Scenery Painted by Mr. J. CAMPBELL, Scenic Artist (late of Drury Lane, Theatre, London).
OUR ARRAY OF TALENT.
 First Appearance of
Miss MARCELLA DAY { The Dashing Burlesque Comic and Burlesque Actress.
 Everybody's Favourite—W. B. WARNER.
Harry CRAWFORD and MOONEY, James America's Greatest Lumber Kickers and Song and Dance Men.
EDDIE HAMPSON { The Lion, Comic and Character Vocalist.
 Soloists (BLAIR SISTERS) Daisy.
CRAYDON and HOLLAND,
 The Australian Team.

Miss Marie Dunoon	Mr. Frank Yorks
Miss Grace Freeman	Mr. Harry Clay
Miss Kate Clay	Mr. F. W. Montague
Miss Lillian Mason	Mr. Robt. Stynes
Miss Nellie Clive	Mr. Saml. White
Miss Agnes Moore	Mr. B. Smith
Miss Alice Watson	Mr. W. Hogg

and others.

Sydney Morning Herald 19 Dec. (1892), 2.

GAIETY THEATRE
 Castlereagh-street, Sydney.
GRAND OPENING NIGHT.
SATURDAY NEXT, MARCH 13th, and EVERY SATURDAY and MONDAY NIGHTS,
 of the
AUSTRALIAN ELEVEN
MINSTREL and VARIETY COMPANY (originally)
 but now a Double Team—22 in number), after Five Months Success in the Suburbs, and now the Rage.

ALL ARTISTS.	ALL ARTISTS.
Andy Blanchard	Kate Henry
Dick Davis	Violet Bishop
Wally Edwards	Rose Fanning
Gus Franks	Annie Gray
Ted Sutton	Maud Fanning
Harry Carlton	Bertha Sutton
Harry Clay	Penelope Cole
James Driscoll	Lillie Florence
George Rocks	Alice Lavigne.

Efficient Orchestra.
 General Admission, Silver Coin.

In March 1897 Harry Clay's Australian Eleven Minstrel and Variety Company opened at Sydney's Gaiety Theatre, with Kate naturally one of the members of the company. The season, which continued through until at least early April, also included appearances by such artists as Wally Edwards, Carlton and Sutton, Dick Davis and Maud Fanning.

The Clays, including daughter Essie, toured Queensland in 1898 for J. L. Travers' Continental Vaudeville Company. This time billed as Kate Henry her feature songs included "Never Change Old Friends" and "Venus." In addition to two Brisbane seasons the company played Rockhampton and Charters Towers.

Sydney Morning Herald 10 Mar. (1897), 2.

Kate joined her husband at Parramatta Town Hall on New Year's night 1899 when he again presented the Australian Eleven, with the engagement presumably being followed by other shows around Sydney. Among the performers engaged were Charles and Will Bovis. In August the Clays returned to Queensland, this time for G. Sullivan's Continental Vaudeville Company. The tour, which continued through until at least November, and possibly up until mid-December, saw them play an initial season at Brisbane's Theatre Royal, followed regional centres such as Rockhampton, Barcaldine, Longreach and Warwick. At Christmas the company also played two shows at the Coogee Aquarium (Syd).

The following year Harry, Kate and Essie secured an engagement with Walter Bell to tour Queensland with his Waxworks, Boer War and London Vaudeville Company. The Clay's were possibly with the company prior to July, however, with the *Morning Bulletin* noting "the company has been travelling with much success in southern towns, having spent a month in Newcastle" (19 July 1900, 5).

After completing his contract with Bell, Clay took his own company to Grafton in December, and after a short skirmish through New South Wales travelled north to Queensland, thereby beginning his 18 years association with the state as an entrepreneur in his own right. As with the first tour the Queensland circuit also included book-end engagements in regional New South Wales. Kate toured with the company through until 1905, after which time it appears that she retired. As with her previous tours she performed solo and concerted numbers while also appearing in various farces - including, for example, "The Chinese Question" (1904).

Very few details have emerged regarding Kate Clay's life after 1905. Of some interest in 1908 is the fact that Harry Clay purchased the property at 218 Glebe Point Road, Glebe, paying the £1,500 asking price in cash. The deeds for the property were, however, registered in Catherine's name.

Catherine Clay passed away on 9 January 1965 in Sydney. She was interred at South Head Cemetery (CEO section), along with Harry and Essie (Allotment No: 236).

218 Glebe Point Road

Source: Clay Djubal



SEE ALSO

- [Harry Clay](#)
- [Harry Clay: Career and Personal Chronology, 1865-1925](#)
- [Essie Clay](#)

ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

- Miss Clay is the possessor of a sweet, well-trained voice, and knows how to make use of it (SMH: 26 Aug. 1895, 5).
- Miss Kate Henry and Miss Emmie Smith are the contralto and soprano respectively of the [Continental] company, and they sang tuneful songs, but of rather a mournful vein, and of course of the narrative order (BC: 29 Nov. 1898, 6).
- That the audience was capable of appreciating items of a less frivolous nature was shown by the unstinted applause with which the ballads of Mr Harry Clay, Miss Ethel Chisholm and Miss Kate Henry were received, the first and last named, in company with Mr Charles Howard, giving in the second portion of the programme, the trio "The Tavern in the Town" (BC: 14 Aug. 1899, 6).

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

- Catherine was named as the owner of the property at 218 Glebe Point Road, Glebe, purchased in 1908. The residence stayed in her name until 1943 when it was sold to Jane O'Grady. At this time Catherine owed Harold T. Morgan (the Mortgagor) £1,934. It does not appear that she lived at the residence then, as the house was likely rented out for quite a number of years. Interestingly, the lessees of the property were all women.

- It is believed that Catherine at some stage was also named as the owner of a property at Watson's Bay known as "Vaucluse Flats." This was sometime around the early to mid-1920s, and possibly the residence where her husband died. Catherine's Statutory Declaration in Harry's Deceased Estate File (dated 19 May 1925) states in part:

The said deceased had no furniture or personal effects other than worn and useless clothing. At the time of his death he was residing with me in a flat. The furniture in the said flat was entirely my own property having been purchased and paid for by me many years ago out of moneys earned by me as an actress and theatrical artists (File No: 20/1021 No 11278).

- In the same Deceased Estate File, another Statutory Declaration (dated 20 Aug. 1953), Catherine also declared that she had only recently become aware of an additional asset in her late husband's estate, being Lot 1 Princess Parade, Kurnell.
- Following the death of her daughter in 1948 Catherine was left an annuity of £2 per week, with four additional sums of £3 each, making a total of £116 per year by her daughter. She also claimed the estate owed her £278.7.9 mostly for money borrowed by Essie in order to have repairs done to her house.

GAIETY THEATRE.
UNDER ENTIRELY NEW
MANAGEMENT.
 Director W. A. BALL.
 Business Representative.. H. R. WOON.
GAIETY
SURPRISE PARTY,
 And Circle of Accomplished Ladies.
TO-NIGHT, AND TO-NIGHT*
TO-NIGHT, EVERY TO-NIGHT.
TO-NIGHT, EVENING. TO-NIGHT.
GIGANTIC SUCCESS.
 Recall after Recall Greeted our New
 Artistes,
CARLTON and SUTTON.
ALSO, THOSE ESTABLISHED
FAVOURITES,
 The Cunards, Nellie Marshall, Kate
 Clay, Fanny Shepherd, The Fanings,
 Helen Gordon, Wall Rockley, Harry
 Clay, Norris and Williams, and Will
 Wallace.
 Our New Programme a Great Success.
 Refinement. Refinement.
 No Vulgarity.
 Our Prices:—2s., 1s., and 6d. Box
 Plan at Nicholson's. Carriages may be
 ordered for 10.30.

Brisbane Courier 11 Sept. (1895), 2.

SONGS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN PERFORMED BY KATE CLAY

Dates in brackets indicate the first known performance. All other dates indicate other years the song was known to have been performed.

- "Carrie" (1905)
- "Dolly May" (1895)
- "I Love My Love" (1905)
- "Letter That Never Came, The" (1895)
- "Little Stars are Peeping" (1904)
- "Moth and the Flame, The" (1903)
- "My Little Boy I Dream of Thee" (1900)
- "Never Change Old Friends" (1898)
- "Not There" (1903)
- "Picture of My Best Friend, A" (1898)
- "Place Thy Loving Arms Around Me" (1895)
- "Pretty Mary Green" (1905)
- "Ship That Belongs to a Lady, The" (1900)
- "Sweet Tennessee" (1898) 1901
- "Venus" (1898)
- "Will You Ever Think of Me?" (1893) Ballad

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