



[Source: Wikimedia Commons WGA06874]

## George COLE [1792-1853]

Married

[1] Sarah COOPER

1820, Sussex

[2] Jane (unknown)

1838

Departed 18 March 1839 from Liverpool  
Arrived 6 July 1839 at Port Adelaide on the

## Lysander

Children of George & Sarah:

Charlotte (1821-1853) m George HILES

George (1823-1893) m Ann MITCHELL

Sarah (1825-1909) m Samuel MAY

Thyrza (1828-1881) m Thomas MITCHELL

Tryphena (1832-1890) m Henry JESSOP

Aaron (1835-1917) m Mary Ann BARLOW

William (1837-1912) m Mary FOUNTAIN

## A Fresh Start for a Reformed Man of Art

We have all heard of S T Gill the colonial painter but few have heard of South Australia's first official sculptor, George Cole.

Cole was born in Chichester, Sussex in 1792 and could only be described as a juvenile delinquent by the age of 12 as well as a heavy drinker. He left home as a teenager and despite his lack of discipline became an expert plasterer and bricklayer. When he was 26 years old he married Sarah Cooper who was a good influence, as George joined the Wesleyan Chapel and became an active prayer leader. However by 1830 he was a confirmed drunkard and his family was living in real poverty.

From 1833 to 1837 he wandered around the southern counties alternating between periods of sobriety and periods of relapse and remorse. Then Sarah died from a fall and George was too drunk to assist. By his own admission, he had hit rock bottom. Six weeks later he attended a temperance tea party, took 'The Pledge' and to his children's amazement, never broke it again.

He decided to start afresh in this colony and with his new wife Jane and seven children arrived on the *Lysander* on July 6 1839. They settled in North Adelaide where he continued his trades of builder, plasterer and stone mason.

George Cole was the first sculptor in South Australia, and sculpted busts for the Governor and other officials. A bust of Reverend Thomas Stow made by him in 1842, now in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, appears to be the only remaining example of his work.

Cole was a founder of the Independent Order of Rechabites Friendly Society and the Total Abstinence Society. He maintained his faith and over the next 14 years was so active in church matters, first for the Wesleyan Methodist Society, and



George Cole's Headstone,  
Walkerville Wesleyan Cemetery

then the Bible Christians, that he was referred to as "Bishop of the Diocese". Still later he came to be known as "Father Cole" due to his overwhelming kindness and compassion. He died, somewhat dramatically in 1853, in the pulpit while reading John 1:20. He got to the last word in verse 20, "I am not the Christ" when he died with the word "Christ" literally on his lips.

Both his son G W Cole and his grandson W J C Cole became members of parliament.

From information provided by Susan Benham Page  
Great-great-great granddaughter of George Cole  
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