

ELIZABETH MITCHELL

Elizabeth Mitchell (née Huon) was born in or near Parramatta in about 1797, the daughter of Marie Gabrielle Louis Huon de Kerilleau and his wife, both French. Her father was from Brittany and fled the French Revolution, subsequently joining the New South Wales Corps in England as a private soldier and arriving in Sydney in 1794. Her mother was Louise de Sage, a Frenchwoman who had been convicted in London of theft in 1794 and transported for seven years. She arrived in Sydney in 1796, met her future husband and gave birth to Elizabeth on June 6, 1797. Her father, who knew John Macarthur, obtained a grant of land and settled at what is now Fairfield.



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In March 1812 Elizabeth married Captain William Mitchell, a retired officer, who was a sheep-farmer at Bungonia, near Campbelltown, NSW. The marriage celebrant was the Rev Samuel Marsden. The family's progress is reported in *Australian Town and Country Journal* of 17 July 1907:

This Captain William Mitchell and Elizabeth Huon, his wife, were the founders of the well-known Mitchell family of Albury and the Upper Murray ... Descendants of his, or connections, constituted the earliest of the band of pioneers in Southern Riverina. The first of the pioneers in the Albury district, for instance, were the Huons, the Dights, and the Mitchells, and the whole of them were directly or indirectly related to the Huons; while some branches of the family are connected with the discoverer of the Murray (or Hume as it was called) – Hamilton Hume. A son of Huon was the first man to acquire station property on the Victorian side of the Murray. While still carrying on his holding in the Campbelltown district, he became possessed of the Wodonga Station, which embraced the whole of the area on which the town of Wodonga now stands. The management of the station (which was taken up about 10 years after Hume and Hovell made their historic journey of discovery) was entrusted to a younger brother of the owner.

In 1836, twelve years after Hume and Hovell's expedition, William Wyse selected a run for Charles Ebden, calling it *Mungabareena*. A lease for the *Mungabareena* run was gazetted in the name of Captain William Mitchell on February 7, 1837, but he died the following September. The lease then passed to Elizabeth.



THOMAS TOWNSEND'S MAP, January 12, 1839

GOOGLE MAPS, August 2019

Key: 1. Mongarberinah, *Mitchell's Station* 2. Murray River 3. Ford
4. Townsend's route in producing the map (dots)

Elizabeth did not come to the Albury area immediately. Thomas, then 19, had managed to build huts, fences and run cattle by August 1839, when a commissioner inspected it. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of December 18, 1915 reported:

Among the early settlers in the Murray River country, where Hume crossed on his journey south, were the sons of Louis Huon ... Captain Mitchell left a large family, whose advent into this district dates from this time. The town of Albury stands on part of the *Mungabareena* run. Of the sons of Captain Mitchell, the best known to the public was the late James Mitchell, of Tabletop station, near Albury, one of the pioneer squatters of Riverina, who died as recently as April 2, 1914, aged 79 years. Another son, John Francis Huon Mitchell is the owner and occupier of *Ravenshoe*, Ravenswood, Victoria, now in his eighty-fifth year, a gentleman much respected in the district. The Huons took up country where Wodonga is now, and Huon's Hill marks the site about two or three miles from that town. Both Huons and Mitchells are now too numerous to particularise.

Elizabeth died on September 6, 1880. Her obituary appeared in *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser* of September 18, 1880:

I have to record the death of a lady who was not only the oldest resident of this district, but probably also the oldest native of the colony. Mrs. Elizabeth Mitchell, who died a few days ago at the residence of Mr A Heriot, her son-in-law, was born at Parramatta in the year 1795, and about the year 1840, being then a widow, removed to Albury and took up the *Mungabareena* station. This run then included the present site of the town of Albury and the surrounding stations of Thurgoona, Tabletop, Bungowannah, and Dight's Forest—an enormous extent of country. At that time I need hardly say the township was but a name, consisting indeed mainly of the orthodox public-house and butcher's shop which are usually held to constitute a village. The native blacks were numerous, and the district, in short, was beyond the limits civilization had then attained. The changes witnessed by the deceased lady were indeed marvellous. Hard by the site occupied by her original stockyard now stand banks, public offices, churches, which would not disgrace the metropolis in point of magnitude or beauty or design ... The deceased, who passed away peacefully whilst asleep, was suffering from no particular ailment other than a general breakup of the system. She leaves a large family of children and grandchildren, many of whom are holders of station property in the district.

The *Australian Town and Country Journal* of October 29, 1887 reported:

Among Mrs Mitchell's family are some of the most successful residents of the Albury district: Thomas, of Tambangalanga; Edward, a worthy man; John, of *Hawksvie*; and James, of Tabletop. Of the daughters, the late Mrs F R Hume, Mrs John Dight, Mrs Steel, Mrs Elliott Heriott, Mrs David Bowen Jones, and Mrs Ancrum Heriott are all old and well-known names in the Albury district; while children and grandchildren are scattered over the colonies.

Sources:

The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser
Australian Town and Country Journal

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/161913707/16497173>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/71090570>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/71594385>

The Sydney Morning Herald

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/15632210>