

# **ANN SOLOMON, HER CHILDREN, AND THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS OF VAN DIEMAN'S LAND**

**By Craig Mackie, October 2018.**

This paper is about a woman named Ann Solomon and her children, some of whom were placed in Orphan Schools in Van Diemen's Land.

Ann was a female convict who was transported on a ship called "The Mermaid" from England to Van Diemen's Land, arriving here with 4 of her children on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1828.

At that time she was 39 years old.

Her children who were transported with her were:

- David aged 9
- Ann aged 6
- Sarah aged 5
- Mark aged approximately 1 or 2.

At the time of their arrival Ann had long been married to Isaac Solomon, or, as he was and is better known, "Ikey" Solomon. They also had two adult children, John and Moses Julian.

Ikey was a notorious inner city London criminal who also found his way to van Diemen's land.

I expect many people here will know of the fictional character Fagin in a famous book by Charles Dickens about an orphan called Oliver Twist. Fagin is widely reputed to be directly based on Ikey.

## **1. ANN SOLOMON' TRIAL**

Some years ago I became aware Ikey lived in Hobart. Having developed an interest in historical criminal law cases in Tasmania, I decided to find out more about this man.

During my research on Ikey, I happened to see that his wife Ann was – as lawyers say – also no stranger to the court system.

I looked further and was intrigued by what I found.

Not so widely known today is that in her own right Ann was an infamous criminal who was widely and publicly lambasted in London as an incorrigible dealer in stolen property and who was also transported to Van Diemen's land for her crimes.

The transcript of her trial still exists.

Here is the evidence of one Joseph Ridley in the Old Bailey on 13th September 1827. Ann was in the dock accused of receiving goods which had been stolen from Ridley. If convicted she faced the very real prospect of being hanged.

***I am master of a ship. On the 17th of August I was robbed of a watch - I do not know the person who stole it - I am sure it was not the prisoner. I had been drinking, and was off my guard. I was not perfectly sober. I lost it in Whitechapel - I had it safe at seven o'clock. I was in company with Mr. Watson, a respectable man. I live in Mile-end-road - I had taken brandy and water - I fell in company with a woman in Whitechapel after I left Mr. Watson, about ten o'clock, and went to a house with her. I am sure I did not give her my watch - I gave her what I had in my waistcoat pocket, it was about five or six shillings. I did not give her the watch, I am certain.***

It appears the woman was not satisfied that her services were worth only 5 or 6 shillings, and decided to supplement her income by taking Joe's watch when he passed out drunk.

Joe Ridley went to the police the next day. The police questioned the woman and quickly gained a good idea where to look for the watch.

Police officer Bill Edwards was part of a raid by numerous police who rushed into Ann Solomon's home in the early hours of 29th August 1827. He found there all sorts interesting objects in all sorts of unusual places...

In evidence he said:

***I am an officer of Hatton-garden. On the 29th of August I assisted in searching a house in Bell-alley, Petticoat-lane, Spitalfields - I believe it is No.12; the prisoner was there; one party secured her- I went up stairs, and did not hear her say any thing; she went up stairs, and saw me searching there - she was secured, with her son and servant, in the first floor; we went up to a bed-room on the second floor; there was a large four-post bedstead, which I removed, and on moving part of the flooring, about a foot and a half in size, I found this watch, with its face upwards - there was another watch and several other things there;***

Ann was arrested and charged with receiving stolen goods.

lkey was nowhere to be found. He had been charged with serious property offences some months earlier, and had managed to escape custody and flee the country. At the time of Ann's arrest he was in North America, leaving Ann to carry on the 'family business' and raise their 4 young children alone.

Ann's trial was of immense public interest. The salacious details of her crimes made all the papers. In short order she was told by a judge that she was to be banished from the country, sentenced to transportation to the colonies for 14 years.

She didn't protest her innocence, blame others, or curse the judge.

It was reported in the papers that she simply cried:

***"Oh my poor children, my poor children".***

And then she collapsed in the dock and had to be assisted back to her prison cell, to await her journey on the Mermaid to Hobart Town.

## **2. WHO WAS ANN SOLOMON?**

So who was this woman?

The 'Bevis Marks' Records, which contain the Birth Register (1767-1881) of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation in London record that Ann was born in that city on the 17th May 1789.

Her birth name was written as 'Hanah Julian'.

Her family were Sephardic Jews. Her father was Moses Julian, her mother was Judith Alexander.

Hanah, or Ann as she became known, was the 5th of 6 children.

She married Ikey on 7 Jan 1807 when she was just 17 years old. She was pregnant at the time, and she had their first child, John, shortly after.

She was only 20 with two children under 3 when Ikey was nicked for pickpocketing and sent to rot in a prison hulk on the English Coast while he awaited transportation. ( He mysteriously managed, by the way, to avoid transportation at that time, and for reasons lost in the mists of time, he somehow arranged to be back on London's streets after a year or two).

After being sentenced Ann described herself to authorities as 35years of age and a dressmaker. She was actually 38, and – as we know - she didn't make dresses. She also said she was Jewish and married with 6 children. That bit was true.

An officious clerk wrote in a convict register this about her:

***'5'0 3/4"; dk brown eyes; dk brown hair; narrow visage; long full bridged nose; dk arched eyebrows; medium sharp chin; small mouth & lips. Reads and writes.'***

Despite the clerk's best efforts to describe her in the most dour and mean terms possible, my impression is that she was probably quite striking in appearance. In the dock her appearance caused a stir, and she was described by a rather surprised newspaper hack as being 'most elegantly dressed'.

Her shock upon conviction quickly dissipated and gave way to a steely determination not to be separated from her children.

She immediately wrote a petition to the King asking that she and her infant children be allowed to make their own way as free passengers to America to join Ikey and there remain.

Endorsed on the petition is a single word response.

**'Nil'**

She was however permitted to bring Mark, David, Sarah and her namesake Ann with her on the convict ship 'the Mermaid' to Hobart.

### **3. WHAT BECAME OF ANN'S CHILDREN UPON THEIR ARRIVAL IN VAN DIEMAN'S LAND**

The trip to Hobart took around 4 months. Ann's behaviour was recorded as 'becoming and exemplary'. Baby Mark and the child Anne were sick with fever on the voyage. x

Upon arrival, Mark was allowed to stay with his mother, who carried him from the Hobart docks on 5th July 1828 straight to the female factory.

Her eldest adult children John and Moses Julian travelled separately to van Diemen's land to support their mother. John was able to quickly convince the authorities to place Mark into his care.

David, Sarah and Ann were immediately removed from Ann's care upon arrival.

Where these three children were kept was originally something of a mystery to me.

Each child's details were recorded on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1828 in the register of children admitted and discharged from the Male and Female Orphan Schools.

Each child is recorded as being kept in an orphanage from that time for almost a whole year, until discharged and reunited with their mother on the 16th June 1829.

They were, however, not housed in the buildings where we are today.

Whilst the Orphan School Register has entries as far back as 19th March 1828, the orphanage where we are today was built after 1830, and so came into being after David, Sarah and Ann had been released back into their mother's care.

It is not widely appreciated that there was an earlier Male Orphan School, which was located in what is now called Lenah Valley. 9 year old David was separated from his family and sent there.

Sarah and Ann were sent together to a Female Orphan School located at the top end or South Hobart end of Davey Street in Hobart.

These orphanages had opened in 1828.

A Government notice in the Hobart Town Gazette in March 1828 stated that the children who were to be admitted to these orphanages had to come within the following categories:

- (a) Those who were entirely destitute;**
- (b) Those who have one parent living;**
- (c) Those who have both parents living... but totally incompetent to afford their means of education; or**
- (d) Children whose parents may be able to contribute maintenance of 12 pounds.**

In practice, as in the case of Ann Solomon, the children of female convicts were frequently placed in these Orphan Schools.

During my research I also found numerous Tasmanian Aboriginal children had been placed in these orphan schools, but that is for another day.

- (a) The Male Orphan School

I want to spend some time talking about the male orphan school that was situated in what is now known as Lenah Valley.

In March 1826 the Editor of the **Colonial Advocate and Tasmanian Monthly Review and Register** commented in an opinion piece that it was regrettable there was neither a male or female orphan school in the colony.

The editor of the **Colonial Advocate and Tasmanian Monthly Review and Register** advised his readers on the 1st March 1828 that the colonial government had decided to establish a Male Orphan School, to be managed by R.W Giblin Esq. It was to be established at Roseway Lodge, near New Town, ***“so that boys may be near the Government Farms, on which some of them are to be practised in the habits of agriculture.”***

On the 16th February 1828 the editor of the 1828 **Hobart Town Courier** stated:

***The labours of the Archdeacon, we are happy to say have nearly succeeded in completing the Orphan School, and a few weeks more will be put it in condition for the reception of pupils. The public will, however, be surprised to learn how few objects present themselves as inmates of this national establishment, and its advantages will be more in prospect of future contingencies than as an immediate relief. The number of objects throughout the whole island will be far short, we hear, of fifty. Many fatherless children who have been brought up in other families, have now become useful in a domestic point of view, so that their guardians can scarcely be expected to part with them; however ignorant in other respects. The school, we understand, will be conducted on the most humane and respectable footing, and the public are looking with no little expectation to the success of Mr. Giblin's labours.***

By April 1828 this Male Orphan School was in existence.

The 1829 Tasmanian Almanac has an entry called "the Itinerary of Van Diemen's Land" which gives us some idea of exactly where it was located.

This itinerary is something of a travel diary, in which roads, buildings and the general infrastructure of Van Diemen's Land is described in detail for its readers at a time when photographs did not exist.

The following is an excerpt from the Itinerary written by someone travelling up Argyle Street past what is now the North Hobart football ground and then turning right onto New Town road, just as no doubt many of you did today to get here:

***"On leaving Hobart Town, Mount Wellington being 4 miles to the left, at the distance of two miles a small road turns off on the right hand to the lower part of New Town. The first house of any note which the traveller meets with is, on crossing the bridge over the New Town rivulet, Mr Lepine's public house, called The Rose.***

Risdon Road runs along the New Town Rivulet, so the Rose presumably stood somewhere near the current Maypole hotel.

The author then describes what is to be found along what we now know as Creek Road, Lenah Valley.

***Lower down on the rivulet is Mr Gatehouse's brewery, the country seats of Messrs Baumont, Fletcher, Fryett, and Hone, and on the opposite side that of Captain Bell, also the residence of the late Mr Broughton.***

"Lower down the rivulet" is a reference to a journey along Creek Road.

It goes on

***...On the left, about a mile from the road is Roseway Lodge, the present residence of the Colonial Treasurer, and near it is the King's male orphan school, formerly Major de Gillhern's distillery, and subsequently Messrs Hume and Peat's Extract of Bark Manufactory.***

The distillery was called the Constantina Distillery.

Today, the building has gone. The site of the male orphanage is on the grounds of the National Foods milk factory located at the back of John Turnball park in Lenah Valley.

Here is a description of the orphanage in an excellent paper called "New Town: A Social History" written by Kim Pearce and Susan Doyle in 2005 :

***In 1827 it was decided that the Constantina Distillery located on the New Town Rivulet was suitable for the Boy's Orphan School. The distillery had been established in 1823. After this enterprise failed it functioned as a wattle bark manufactory run by William Peat and James Hume. Peat considered the only problem with the building was the dirt from his***

***manufacturing endeavours. One would expect that the building would have been on a par with the Cascade Female Factory, another converted distillery – not exactly salubrious.***

The reference to the male orphan school being located next to the residence of the Colonial Treasurer is interesting. His name was Jocelyn Thomas. He was also on what we would now call a steering committee for the creation of this New Town orphanage. You will not, however, find him in the records of any board of governance for this orphanage. Regrettably for him, Lieutenant Governor Arthur received a tip off and organised an urgent audit of the treasury finances in late 1832. Accordingly to Lloyd Robson in the first volume of 'History of Tasmania, It was discovered Mr Thomas had nicked in excess of 10,000 pounds from the public coffers. In today's money that is millions. Wisely, Thomas quickly absconded from the island before he could be apprehended.

(b) The Female Orphan School

Slightly preceding the existence of the male orphan school at the old distillery was the creation of a female orphan school.

In March 1828 the Colonial Government leased a private property in Davey Street which had a large building on it called 'Bellevue'.

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1828 the editor of **the Colonial Advocate and Tasmanian Monthly Review and Register** wrote this:

***That fine building belonging to Mr. Loane, and late the residence of Mr. E. Curr, has been rented by Government for a Female Orphan School. It is singular that this building is erected nearly on the same spot where the late Lieutenant Governor Collins erected an Orphan School nearly 20 years ago. It is to be conducted, we understand, by Mr. and Mrs. Chorley.***

The Female Orphan School was situated at Bellevue from 1828 until it was transferred here in New Town sometime in around 1831.

Sarah and Ann Solomon were some of the very first children placed in this Orphan School arriving on 5th July 1828.

We actually know exactly where the Bellevue property was, because in the 1830s it was the subject a long running and quite scurrilous legal dispute. At the time a Mr Walpole Loane owned the Bellevue property, that is, until one day in 1833 when one Mademoiselle Elaine d'Hotman forged some title documents which the equivalent of the Land Titles Office somehow accepted, causing the property to be formally registered in her name. The matter was litigated before the Supreme Court, during which time it was established that the Bellevue property encompassed just over two acres, and was a rectangular piece of land that bordered Davey Street, Antill Street, Fitzroy Place and Molle Street. So, in other words, today it would be considered some of the very best real estate in Hobart.

The building itself still exists and is located at 31 Fitzroy Place, which is on the corner of Fitzroy Place and Antill Street. It is a wonderful old building and well worth a drive by. Perhaps one day it could also be the subject of an excursion. Bellevue was described by newspapers of the day as a 'fine building' and a "commodious mansion".

As I have said it was noted that the building was erected on nearly the same spot where Lieutenant Governor Collins had erected an orphanage some 20 years previously. That surely is worth the effort of some further investigation at a later date.

A lease advertisement in 1828 describes the building this way:

***"The 45m square house includes a dining room, study, three bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, pantry and scullery on the ground floor, and a lounge, dining room, kitchen and balcony on the first floor. It has a coach house, three stables, a fowl house and a well stocked garden. It has a picturesque view of the town, harbour and surrounding country."***

This mansion could not have been the only building on the property in which the children were accommodated. There is, for instance, a record from November 1828 to the effect that the male and female orphanages had 50 scholars each.

We have some insight into the lives of the Solomon children and the other children at these early orphan schools. The management committee for the two orphan schools met regularly and kept minutes of their meetings.

At their meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1825 at St David's church they formally agreed to take the three Solomon children into the Orphan Schools.

The committee documented with particularity what diet of the Orphan School Children should be.

Breakfast was Oatmeal porridge with some milk or bread and tea with sugar and milk.

Lunch was the main meal of the day.

Mondays and Thursdays was baked meat, bread, and vegetables.

Tuesdays and Fridays was soup of meat thickened with oatmeal, vegetables, and bread.

Wednesdays and Saturdays was boiled and baked puddings with suet.

Sunday was cold boiled beef, vegetables and bread.

Supper each day was bread, tea and milk.

The appointment of Mr and Mrs Chorley as overseers of the orphanage did not prove to be a success.

On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1828 - less than a fortnight after the arrival of the Solomon children - the committee ordered the Chorleys provide them with documents and information concerning their supervision of the Female Orphan School.

It is clear from the minutes the committee were trying to keep the investigation a secret. Nevertheless, by the end of July it became public knowledge there was an investigation under way.

On 1st August 1828 the Colonial Advocate and Tasmanian Monthly Review and Register noted:

We hear that an investigation has been going on for "***several days past, respecting a charge made against some persons connected with the Female Orphan School, for detaining part of the provisions allowed to the children. If it should be clearly proved that any person has been guilty of so abominable a crime, there can be little pity for the parties, whatever punishment may be inflicted upon them.***"

It became apparent that servants at the Orphan School had reported to church authorities that the Chorleys had been taking flour and other provisions meant for the children and selling it, keeping the money for themselves. In scenes reminiscent of Oliver Twist, the committee also found oatmeal porridge had been withheld from the children, who were instead given a breakfast of what was described as a 'very thin gruel'. Three servants reported Mr Chorley's poultry, consisting of turkeys, geese, ducks and hens, were fed by him twice a day with oatmeal.

Another servant reported children being slapped by the Chorleys.

Children were reported to be eating discarded rubbish including bones and turnip peelings, and complaining of hunger. Servants reported children begging from them for food.

The Chorleys were summonsed to appear before the committee at St David's church in August 1828. Mr Chorley originally refused to come, leaving his wife to answer questions. The Committee demanded she get him, and a short while later he arrived at the meeting having travelled the 750 meters or so from Bellevue. Both denied stealing food. Mr Chorley agreed he had hit some of the children, but said it was done to keep them '*quiet and orderly*'.

The Chorleys did ultimately acknowledge they had falsified the orphanage accounts and had taken provisions meant for the children, and had been doing so from the very first week they were in charge.

The committee not surprisingly recommended they be dismissed.

On 6th December 1828 the Hobart Town Courier abruptly reported:

***The Reverend James Norman is appointed master and Mrs. Norman, Matron of the King's Female Orphan School vice - Mr. and Mrs. Chorley, removed for improper conduct.***

Sarah and Ann Solomon, starved and quite possibly physically abused during their short but eventful time at the orphan school, left Bellevue and were released into their mother's care on the 16th June 1829.

#### **4. WHAT BECAME OF ANN AND HER CHILDREN**

Mark, who made the journey to Tasmania as a baby on a convict ship, never married. He became a labourer in Hobart and died on typhoid at the age of 57 in 1877.

David, the boy sent alone at the age of 9 to an orphan school, married a woman named Susan Raynor and was a shop keeper in Longford. He had a large family. He died of tuberculosis there at the age of 42 on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1860.

Sarah married a Jewish draper named Godfrey Levy in the home of her parents in New Town in 1847. She died in 1882 at the age of 59.

I presently unsure what happened to the child Ann or Nancy as she was known, although I believe she shifted at some stage to live in Carlton in Victoria.

Moses Julian became a well known businessman and family man who died Richmond, Victoria aged 84 in 1896. His death certificate states his profession as 'gentleman'.

John moved to Sydney and became an extremely wealthy businessman and respected member of the community. He died in 1889. His portrait hangs today in the Jewish Museum of Australia located in St Kilda in Melbourne.

Ann may not have been perfect, but she fought hard to raise her children in difficult circumstances. As far as I can ascertain all Ann's children lived exemplary lives, and I could find no court appearances or negative publicity about any of them. That is Ann's legacy.

Ann lived in Tasmania for essentially the rest of her life.

Her story is quite an amazing one, but is well beyond the scope of this paper.

She was granted a ticket of leave in November 1838 and a conditional pardon in 1840.

Ikey and Ann separated sometime in the 1830s after a tumultuous, obsessive, and at times violent marriage.

Ikey died in Hobart in 1850, and, despite their long estrangement, Ann made sure she got letters of administration over his intestate estate and pocketed the 70-odd pounds he had to his name at the time of his death. He was buried in the old Jewish Cemetery in Harrington Street and some time later reburied in the Cornelian Bay Cemetery.

In 1875 she set sail on the sea the last time, this time as a free woman, and this time to Melbourne where she joined family members living in Carlton. She died at her home in Drummond Street in Carlton on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1877. It is a terrace house that still stands today.

She is buried in the Old Melbourne Cemetery in Carlton. I have been to her grave. It has no stone or marker of any sort to acknowledge the life of this feisty, colourful, determined woman.

Craig Mackie.