

Report on Michelle Urban talk on Jewish Convicts

by Joanne Hyland

(Part of Michelle Urban's report with additional information added in the report by Joanne Hyland).

LAPIDUS, Elias. 1818, jeweller, literate, receiving stolen goods 14 yrs, Convict no. 107, Hashemy to WA. 1850, T.L. 1851 & C.P. 1854, worked for self. LAPIDUS took a shipment to Singapore, got caught up in a shady business deal and did not return to WA. Esther (nee ISRAEL - sister of Brina Krakouer) and wife of LAPIDUS - who subsequently married James SARGENT of Fremantle in 1860.

KRAKOUER, Theodore. 1818, wool sorter, literate, stealing clothes & money 15 yrs, 1851, T.L. 1852 and expirée 1865, worked for self.

Elias LAPIDUS and Theodore Krakouer, another Jewish ticket-of-leave man, operated a livery stable and trading in the shipment of horses to the British Army in India.

Brina and Esther ISRAEL, two young Jewess sisters, arrived in the colony from England and were employed by the two men, Brina taking up with Krakouer and Esther with Lapidus.

Elias and Esther had two children born in Fremantle, Nathan in 1854 and Rachel in 1855. Shortly after Rachel's birth, Elias was named in court as a party having received stolen goods, namely butter, the property of T. Brown of Fremantle. Lapidus absconded while on bail in December 1855 aboard the *Siren* from Rottnest Island headed to Singapore and did not return.

After marriage to James Sargent in Fremantle in 1860, Esther had two more children, Frances Elizabeth born in 1860 and William Arthur born in 1862.

Michelle's summary of early Jewish life in WA:

- It was not easy to be a Jew in the early days of settlement in Western Australia for the free settler on the land.
- There were none of the trappings, offices and services that are provided by congregational organisation.
- The lack of Jewish women meant permanent bachelorhood or marriage outside of the faith. As a result there are few if any Jewish descendants today.
- Although the convict origins of families were kept hidden for many years, there are today some who can and do claim a Jewish convict ancestor.
- Full credit goes to those Jewish convicts transported to Western Australia between 1850 and 1868 who not only kept their faith under awful conditions but actively promoted Judaism in the best way they could for the benefit of their fellow Jews and subsequent generations.
- It would be another 20 years before the Jews of Western Australia would come together to form a Hebrew Congregation.

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