

JAMES OSBORNE [5756]

AGE - 41 years
HEIGHT - 5'7"
HAIR COLOUR - dark brown
COLOUR OF EYES - dark hazel
SHAPE OF FACE - oval
COMPLEXION - sallow
BUILD - middling stout
DISTINGUISHING FEATURES - scar on right hand⁽¹⁾

James was also known by the alias names of Joseph Crippin and Joseph Collins.⁽¹⁾ A literate Englishman of Protestant beliefs, he was born in 1820. A mill sawyer by trade, ⁽²⁾ it was during 1859 that James, charged with feloniously uttering a £5 Bank of England note with intent to defraud the Governor and the Bank of England, was convicted on Friday 29 July, at the Assizes, Shrewsbury. The site of his latest crime, committed on 6 July, was Donnington in the tranquil meadows and wooded hillsides north east of Telford and within the Parish of Lilleshall.⁽³⁾ A warrant was issued on 23 July, the very same day that James, lamenting "it is easy for a man to get into trouble," was taken into custody.⁽⁴⁾ Undefended he was brought before Mr Justice Willes for trial, the details of which were printed in the London Times of Monday 1 August. Magistrate, Sir T.F.F. Boughey, Bart of Newport three miles north east of Lilleshall, appeared for the prosecution.⁽⁵⁾

It was stated in evidence that on 11 July there was to be a sale of timber at Lilleshall, the seat of the Duke of Sutherland. A few days previously on the 6th of the month, James called upon the chief wood ranger who directed a woodman to go around with the prisoner and show him the various lots for auction. After walking some distance to inspect several piles of timber, James complained of exhaustion and the heat. He then requested to know the whereabouts of the nearest public house so the obliging woodman accompanied James to the beer-house at Donnington, the venue where the counterfeit note was passed to the unsuspecting, landlord's daughter. Upon taking leave of his guide, James stated that his name was Edwards and that he was a buyer of timber for the Coalbrookdale Company on whose behalf he would attend the forthcoming sale. That statement did not come to fruition and, not surprisingly, a subsequent inquiry proved that he was not associated with Abraham Darby's corporation, nor did he reside in the valley of the Coal Brook.⁽⁷⁾

Meandering the side roads in its vicinity, past the steep narrow streets of Ironbridge, he neared the rural outskirts of Madeley. On major routes he past roadside toll-houses, many now converted into charming dwellings, and noted horse drawn carriages halting at barriers. Built where one turnpike trust ended and responsibility for the next stretch began, the shelters were frequently octagonal in shape so that the windows could be angled towards all necessary directions. James may have nodded to the crusty toll-collector yet, being a thrifty man, his intent would not have been to cross Iron Bridge where a halfpenny fee was to be paid by every foot passenger - the same amount as for a pig, calf, sheep or lamb. Meanwhile the bank note in question was traced to the account's office of the Great Western Railway Company at Wolverhampton.⁽⁸⁾

In order to show previous fraudulent intent, evidence was given that on 13 June, James Osborne, under somewhat similar circumstances, had passed another forged £5 note at Tipton in Staffordshire.⁽⁹⁾ A town in the parish of the same name, it is one and a half miles north of Dudley and eight and a half miles north west of Birmingham.⁽¹⁰⁾ Proceeding directly to the public house, James allegedly stated that he had come to attend Mr Morris' sale. He went on to explain that he had recently acquired a job in Shropshire and was in need of some good horses and stone carts. The hospitable publican accompanied him to his destination and introduced him to Mr Morris, waiting patiently while all articles for the intended sale were identified and inspected. James and his new found friend returned to the latter's pothouse. In appreciation of the good will and service shown to him, James liberally entertained the proprietor to glasses of the man's own ale, giving a forged £5 Bank of England note as payment. Mr Osborne left, saying he would call for the publican in the morning at ten o'clock and accompany him to the auction; a promise that was not kept.⁽¹¹⁾

In his defence, he stated that a man in Birmingham who had won them gambling had given the notes to him. Not daring to dispose of them there, both men considered it prudent that the counterfeit money be utilised in country areas and, armed with his portion, James began his mission. Winding towards Shawbury, he called at Tipton, and before leaving for Wolverhampton, spent several hours with the publican and Mr Morris. Traversing the market town that dates to medieval times, it is unlikely that he visited its foundries or brassware outlets before continuing to Shifnal and then Donnington. It took little time for the jury to reach a conclusion of guilt. Mr Justice Willes

observed this to be "a very bad case," labelling James as "no doubt one of those persons called regular smashers." Furthermore he believed that the prisoner procured the notes first hand from the makers in Birmingham with the intent of circulating them throughout the country. Convicted on two previous occasions, once for passing a counterfeit coin, His Lordship was convinced that James was "a most dangerous person," one deserving of fifteen years penal servitude.⁽¹²⁾

Solitary confinement, followed by internment within Portland Prison, proceeded his transportation to Fremantle per **Palmerston**. For two days she laid at anchor in Gage Roads harbouring five cases of stationery, one case of implements and twenty-seven barrels of soap in the cargo hold.⁽¹⁵⁾

On receiving his ticket-of-leave, James did not go at once to Champion Bay, rather, on 14 September 1863, he began employment as a labourer with J. Brown of Fremantle by whom he was paid 30/- a month. It was also on that date that his parchment papers were sent to the Resident Magistrate of the port town. Two months hence, on 11 November, he was granted a pass to the Vasse area where he worked for Mr Henry Yellerton in the capacity of a shipwright and his salary was doubled. James applied for a second district pass, this time to Champion Bay, an application that was approved on 14 April 1864 and four days later he was engaged by Chapman and Garrard at the Bay, exclusively as a salaried shipwright.

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS.

During 1869 Local Government documents labelled James Osborne as an Agriculturist, for possession of a one hundred acre tillage property at Bootenal encouraged James to try his hand at farming. In an agreement with that authority, dated 6 April 1869, he received thirty-two and a half bushels of good seed wheat as an advance to be re-paid in cash. He was charged with a repayment of £11/11/4d, the value of the seed wheat plus interest thereon at the rate of 5% per annum, to be paid on or before 1 April 1887.⁽¹⁶⁾

One of the eleven ticket-of-leave men employed by James was John William [6120], a person who was thrown from a horse and killed at Greenough on 24 July 1867. Two years earlier on 24 October, the poor fellow was punished for engaging in intercourse with an aboriginal woman and placed on bread and water for seven days.

On 7 October 1878 James had sold the "good will" and possessions of his brokerage at Lot 44 to James Hanlon for the sum of £40, the deal being witnessed by Stephen Montague Stout and registered by Nathaniel Howell.⁽¹¹²⁾

REFERENCE:-

(001) Comptroller General's Office, Fremantle. Personal & Other Description of Men Belonging to Convict Department of Western Australia per Ship Palmerston.

(002) ACC 1156/R4 and The Calendar of Prisoners Tried at the Summer Assizes July 1859, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

(003) ACC 1156/R7.

(004) The Calendar of Prisoners Tried at the Summer Assizes July 1859, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

(005) Ibid.

(006) "The London Times," Monday, 1 August, 1859.

(007) Ibid.

(008) Ibid.

(009) The Calendar of Prisoners Tried at the Summer Assizes July 1859, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

(010) Written information from Mr Barry Watson, 10 Ryndle Walk, Scarborough, N. Yorkshire. 09/08/1995.

(011) "The London Times," Monday, 1 August 1859.

(012) "The London Times," Monday 1 August 1859.

(013) "The Inquirer," Wednesday 20 February 1861.

(014) Ibid. Wednesday 20 February 1861.

(015) Ibid. Wednesday 20 February 1861.

(016) Department of Land Administration Memorial, Vol 7, Item 150.

Will copy the marriage certificate and that of Lola's birth for you, plus add to the story of James' life in WA.