

Joseph WATKINS

PYRENEES CONVICT # 1779 – Journey 2. By Carol Wheat

Joseph WATKINS arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia on 30 April 1853. He was listed as married with 1 child, a blacksmith's striker. Aged 29, he was sentenced at Worcester on 1st July 1850 to 7 years transportation for sheep stealing. Joseph was baptised 20 December 1822 at Colwall, Herefordshire England. Joseph, aged 21, had been convicted in Hereford for fraud on 21 March 1844 and had been sentenced to 4 months gaol with hard labour for trying to obtain a gallon of gin from a John Cox, pretending he was getting it for Silvanus Vick of Old Castles in the Parish of Colwall. He married 20 December 1849 in Colwall, to Harriet Wingate/Winwood and had a daughter Mary Anne. In Worcester on 1 July 1850 Joseph was on trial for stealing 3 sheep from Hook Common on 3 June. He was found guilty and sentenced to 7 years transportation. In the English Census on 30 March 1851 Joseph was residing as a prisoner in Wakefield House of Corrections.

Joseph WATKINS left England on 2 February 1853 bound for the Swan River Colony, on board the *Pyrenees*, the ninth of 37 shipments of male convicts destined for Western Australia, arriving in Fremantle on 30 April 1853. Joseph was granted his ticket of leave on arrival and had a relationship with Catherine TULLY, resulting in the birth of 4 daughters. They were not legally married. Catherine, a Mountbellow Workhouse orphan girl from Castleblakeney, Galway, had arrived on the Irish Bride Ship *Palestine* from Plymouth in 1853.

In York, Western Australia, on the Census taken 31 December 1859, Joseph is mentioned as a carter; semi-literate; C/E; with Catherine Tully, illiterate plus 3 daughters. Another daughter was born in 1862. Joe was a teamster and away from home a lot, and Catherine would often visit her sister Bridget who also had arrived on the Bride ship *Palestine*.

In July 1863 Joe was again on trial in Perth Supreme Court for Larceny, accused of stealing articles of Harness the property of J.H. Monger of

York. He was found Guilty by Jury, verdict 12 months imprisonment, and Kate was left to raise the children on her own. It must have been a struggle for her, as not long after this Kate disappeared and her sister 'Biddy' and husband Sam Willis (Sea Park convict # 2714) who had no children, took on the care of her children. Joe came and went throughout the girls' lives, but their mother never returned. Joseph later married at York on 29 December 1876 to Charlotte Ann LITTLE (nee LEEDER), widow of James LITTLE, expiree. In another court case at which he was a witness in July 1878, Joseph states that he is a Teamster for Mr William Smith at Beverley. This marriage also did not last, as on 8 October 1879 Joseph Watkins of York, advertises a notice that he is no longer responsible for debts incurred by his wife Ann. They both died in 1901, Charlotte Ann on 20 June at her daughter's home in Beverley, aged 69, after a long illness and Joseph suddenly on 24 July at Green Hills, near York aged 84. His funeral departed from the residence of his son-in-law, Mr. R. BOYLE, husband of his youngest daughter Ellen (Helen) Tully WATKINS. Joseph was interred at Green Hills Cemetery.

For those interested check out the Mountbellew Orphan Girls Project online at:
<https://www.facebook.com/MountbellewOrphanGirlsProject>

Carol Wheat has written a series of related convict stories called 'Convicts in the Family' based on her husband, Jeffrey George Wheat's family history.