

## Jesse Miller, 116, *Hashemy*

Researched by Marcia Watson

The origins of Jesse Miller are unknown.

Convict Jesse Miller gave the following information:

His father in law (*step father*) is Thomas Adams, a brass moulder of Stepney near London. His mother is Mary Adams. <sup>1</sup> At Portland Prison he said his mother Mary Miller was at Bishop Stortford Union, Hertfordshire.

Possible baptisms in **1832**, although he may not have been baptised:

1. Jesse Miller was baptised on 15 July 1832, daughter of Jesse and Mary, at Bishop Stortford, Hertfordshire. The father was a bargeman. A month before his birth, the probable father Jesse Miller was buried on 18 June 1832, aged 23.<sup>2,3</sup> [no record had been found for a female 'Jesse' in Bishop Stortford]
2. Jesse William Miller, baptised 30 December 1832, Camberwell, son of Jesse and Mary Ann Miller. The father was a poulterer.

Is this Mary Miller his mother?

On 6 February **1833** she was removed from Camberwell to Bishops Stortford with **her child Jesse William**. It appears Mary was again removed from Camberwell on 25 March 1835 as she did not have any legal settlement there. In an examination document, Mary said to her knowledge she has not gained any settlement and was with her child, Jesse William aged 2, poor and chargeable to the Parish of Camberwell. Her parish was Bishops Stortford. Mary signed the examination document. <sup>4</sup>

From the information Jesse gave, this is the family he mentioned:

**1838.** Marriage on 10 July 1838, by banns, at Parish church of St Mary's, Lambeth.

Thomas Adams, full age widower, brass founder of Upper Marsh, father James Adams, carpenter, deceased. Thomas signed (poorly).

Mary Ann Miller, full age, widow of Upper Marsh, father was William Martin, barge builder, deceased.

Mary Ann made her mark. (I haven't been able to find a first marriage for Mary Martin and a Miller.)

**1841** census: King David Fort, St George, East, St George in the East, London & Middlesex, England. <sup>5</sup>

Thomas Adams, 60, brass founder, born Middlesex

Mary Adams, 40, born Middlesex

There is a Jesse Miller, male, aged 8, in the Bishop Stortford Union workhouse on the 1841 census.<sup>6</sup>

After his conviction in 1849, Jesse Miller gave his next of kin as his mother Mary Miller, of Bishop Stortford Union.<sup>7</sup>

**October 1848.** The late fire at Little Waltham, Essex. [Little Waltham is near Chelmsford, Essex] **Jesse Miller** and George Growsett have been committed to the County Gaol Spring Field for month's hard labour as **vagrants**, having been found wandering in the neighbourhood without visible means of subsistence. We understand they were seen going in a direction from Rove's farm, immediately after the stack on the premises was found to be on fire, on the 16th inst. and when apprehended and number of quinces in their pockets, from which is inferred that they had passed through Mr. Poole's orchard, where they had gathered them, their own account of the possession of them having been ascertained to be false.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SROWA Acc 1156 R21A

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Stortford parish register

<sup>3</sup> PCOM2/63

<sup>4</sup> Family Search film 8085470. Image 272

<sup>5</sup> HO107/697/2, p8

<sup>6</sup> HO 107/434/3, p52

<sup>7</sup> PCOM2/63

<sup>8</sup> Chelmsford Chronicle, 27 October 1848, p3

**November 1848.** The Fire at Little Waltham Committal of Incendiaries

On the 16th ult., as our readers are already aware, a wheat stack, upon Rolph's Farm, Little Waltham, in the occupation of Mr. James Poole, was discovered to be on fire, and its destruction was attributed to the hand of some vile incendiary. Two youths, named Jesse Miller and George Growsett, who were seen upon the spot a short time previously, and who, it appeared, obtained their living as vagrants, were on the same evening apprehended in the New London Road. Chelmsford, when, from the confused statements they made, they were suspected of being implicated in the foul transaction, but upon their examination before J. Boggis, Esq., the evidence was deemed insufficient to sustain the charge, and they were committed for a month as vagrants. —

Superintendent Oakley, of the Essex constabulary, immediately commenced a rigid ex-amination, of the circumstances attending the fire, and, fresh facts having been discovered, the prisoners were on Saturday taken before Captain Skinner and the Rev. A. Pearson, at the County Gaol, for examination, the unexpired term of their punishment as vagrants rendering it impossible that they could be removed for examination to the petty sessions.

The following evidence was adduced : — The prosecutor said on the 10th ult. about half-past six p.m. he received information from George Bland, that a wheat stack standing on Rolph's Farm, Little Waltham, was on fire, and that two young men had been seen going towards the spot a few minutes before the fire broke out; he immediately proceeded to the farm, and finding Bland's statement to be true, he started to Chelmsford for the engine, and gave information at the police-station to Superintendent Oakley, who repaired to the spot; on his return to the stack, which contained about 36qrs, and was worth nearly £100, he found the flames raging round it, and it was all destroyed except about £3 worth; he did not see anything of the men of whom Bland spoke, although he kept a sharp look out; the stack stood within a few feet of the road, and there was an orchard close to it, in which quinces were growing at the time of the fire. Thomas Warner, a youth, said he was coming from Great Waltham to Chelmsford, on the night in question, in a pony gig, and when near the stacks he saw what he at first supposed was a lantern ; the pony shyed at it, and whilst watching it he saw the flames running up the stack ; he then gave the alarm to some workmen whom he met on the road going towards the stack, and proceeded through Broomfield, calling "Fire;" from the appearance of the light he believed the fire had not been lighted many minutes ; he did not see the prisoners on the road, nor had he any knowledge of them.

George Bland said he was going past the stack about a quarter-past six towards Little Waltham, and when about 300 yards from the spot he met the prisoners, Growsett being in the road and Miller in a pasture field on the opposite side of the road. The stack was not on fire at the time he passed it, but when returning from Little Waltham by the fields he heard a cry of " Fire" when within a quarter of a mile of the stack, and about a quarter of an hour after he passed the prisoners. Witness ran back to the Bell public-house, Waltham, and after alarming the people there went to Mr. Poole's house and acquainted him with the fire, to which they both went, and whilst Poole went for the engines Bland looked out for the prisoners, whom he suspected in consequence of not meeting other persons on the road. Failing to discover them he started for Chelmsford with his letters, and on his way called at the King's Arms, Broomfield, to ascertain if the prisoners had been seen there, and gave a description of Miller's attire. The same evening, about half-past 10 o'clock, he saw the prisoners in custody of the police, and distinctly identified Miller as the man he had seen near the stack.

James Holder, ostler, at the King's Arms, Broomfield, proved that on the night of the fire, after the alarm had been given by Bland, he was standing near the door, looking out for the fire, and he said to the prisoners, who were passing at the moment, "I can't see the tire," when one of them replied " Oh, it's only a bit of a wheat stack," and proceeded towards Chelmsford; soon afterwards he followed into the road and met them near the Angel to identify them.

Eliza Bush proved that on the night of the fire, between seven and eight, she met the prisoners near Broomfield, and as she was passing there Miller said to her, " here will be a b—y good fire tonight." At that time she had not heard the alarm of fire, and took no notice of the remark made by Miller.

Inspector Catchpool said on the evening of the 16th he went to the fire, and from information he received from Mr. Poole he was induced to look after the prisoners, they were apprehended about eleven o'clock the same night. They said they came from Stortford, through Dunmow, and left Waltham about six o'clock, reaching Chelmsford at nine o'clock; in answer to his questions they said they saw the fire, of which

there was not then much. The reason they assigned for not assisting to extinguish it was that they were in a hurry to get to Chelmsford; upon their removal to the lock up several quinces were found in their pockets, which they said had been given them by Mr. Patmore at Stortford, for whom they had worked gathering die same kind of fruit. No lucifers, or pipes, or anything of the kind, were found upon them.

The prisoners declined making any defence, and the Magistrates, after about 20 minutes' deliberation, committed the prisoners for trial at the assizes.<sup>9</sup>

At their trial at the Essex Assizes, held at Chelmsford on 5 March 1849:

Jesse Miller 17 and George Growsett 16, labourers, were indicted for setting fire on a wheat stack, value £100, the property of James Poole, at Little Waltham. Mr Chambers for the prosecutor; prisoners were undefended. Guilty – 14 years transportation.<sup>10</sup>

Jesse was received at Millbank Prison from Springfield Prison, Essex on 24 October 1849.<sup>11</sup> He was 17, single, R&W imperfectly, labourer, first conviction. Transferred to Pentonville Prison on 22 December 1849. At Pentonville, Jesse was 17, single, could read and write, farm labourer, 9st 10lbs, mother Mary Miller at Bishop Stortford Union, Hertfordshire. Removed to Portland on 11 June 1850.<sup>12</sup> From Portland he boarded the *Hashemy* for the voyage to Western Australia.

On arrival in Western Australia in October 1850, he was described as:

116. Jesse Miller, 19, 5' 8¼", dark brown hair, hazel eyes- one deficient, round face, olive complexion, stout, one eye (left) lost, a labourer and single.<sup>13</sup>

General Register:

116. Jesse Miller, 22 (in 1852), single, assistant teacher, public school, his reading was good, and his writing and maths were very good. Jesse said his father in law (*sic*) was Thomas Adams, a brass moulder of Stepney near London. His mother was Mary Adams.

Attended Divine Service?	Very regularly
Received Sacrament?	Not before being in prison
Habits?	Sober and attentive to his business
Intellect?	Sound
State of Mind?	Very hopeful
Knowledge, Secular?	Limited
Knowledge, Religious?	Limited owing to imperfect memory
Alleged Cause of Crime?	Bad company
Name of Person referred to for Character, &c.	Makes no reference.

(Note: His occupation and education seem to be wrongly recorded, or apply to another convict).<sup>14</sup>

Casual sick list, Fremantle.<sup>15</sup>

Miller Jesse	2 November 1850	Nyctolopia	Lotion Cincher
Milner Jesse	14 November 1850	Nyctolopia	Shade
Milner Jesse	15 November 1850	Bad eyes	
Miller Jesse	29 December 1850	Cough	Cough mixture
Miller Jesse	13 January 1851	Nyctolopia	Blue pill every other night
Miller Jesse	20 January 1851		
Milner Jesse	3 March 1851	Cough	Cough mixture
Miller Jesse	4 March 1851	Febris C.C.	Mixture febris
Miller Jesse	5 March 1851	Feb. C.C.	Continue mixture
Miller John	10 March 1851		Op: medicine

There isn't a convict called John Miller during this time period, it is probably Jesse.

Op = opening or purgative.

<sup>9</sup> Essex Standard, 03 November 1848, p2

<sup>10</sup> The Essex Standard, and General Advertiser for the Eastern, 16 March 1849, p4

<sup>11</sup> HO24/4

<sup>12</sup> HO24/16; PCOM2/63

<sup>13</sup> SROWA Acc 128/40-3

<sup>14</sup> SROWA Acc 1156 R21A

<sup>15</sup> SROWA Acc 1156 CS1

Jesse received a Ticket of leave on 5 March 1852.

In December 1852, Alexander Warren purchased the Devonshire Arms, Hay Street, Perth from James Dolbear.

On 10 January 1853: Jesse was working for Alex. Warren, Victualler of Perth. His wages were £2 per month.<sup>16</sup>

A Conditional Pardon was issued on 30 December 1854.<sup>17</sup>

Between July and December 1854, Jesse earned £21.19.9, and paid 8s towards his passage money.

18 August 1855: Unclaimed letter for Jesse Miller at the General Post Office.<sup>18</sup>

Jesse's sentenced would have expired in late 1862 or 1863. No further information has been found.

Or did he escape and return to England?

### His partner in crime in England.

**George Growsett** was sent to Tasmania in 1852. His native place was Hertford. George was constantly in trouble and absconding. He was sentenced to 15 years for armed robbery in 1860 and sent to Port Arthur. The last reference to him is in 1873 when he received a ticket of leave.

From: <https://thomasnevin.com/2019/10/21/prisoner-george-growsett-1860-and-1873/>

George Growsett threatened suicide at trial in 1860 for armed robbery, protesting that he would rather be hanged than endure a lengthy sentence. A sentence of death was duly recorded, which he boastfully informed the court he wanted, but his sentence was commuted a few days later to 15 years in penal servitude. He was photographed by Thomas J. Nevin at the Mayor's Court, Hobart Town Hall, on discharge on September 5th, 1873. He must have committed further offences (to be included here later if found), since Nevin's original photograph of 1873, numbered "79" in the Hobart Gaol Photo Book, was duplicated, numbered "264" for application to the prisoner's rap sheet on sentencing for further offences.



The prisoner in a most insolent manner said he knew very well that the question was only a matter of form; he had not been tried at all, and did not consider that he had had a fair trial. The witnesses had sworn what they liked, and he had not been defended by counsel ; in fact, he had been sold like a bullock in Smithfield Market ; he knew very well that His Honor had his sentence ready written before him, and that the whole thing was a matter of form. He knew very well that he should have a long sentence, but His Honor had better sentence him to be hanged, as he should never do a long sentence; in fact, he could not do it whether he received it or not (Mercury 7 September 1860).

More articles in the Tasmania newspapers.

<sup>16</sup> SROWA Cons 1386/1/404

<sup>17</sup> SROWA Acc 1156 R21B

<sup>18</sup> The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News (WA : 1848 - 1864), 24 August 1855, p4