

Samuel Scattergood - Scindian Convict # 1

Samuel Scattergood, was an unmarried gardener living in Sheepshead (today Shepshed), 15 miles north-west of Leicester, when he stole a grafting tool on 10 April 1842 from local farmer Samuel Peach. Scattergood made no defence at his trial and was found guilty, sentenced to two months' imprisonment to hard labour, with one week in solitary confinement. When he committed his second offence on 31 December 1847 in company with his recently bereaved friend William Branson, the sentence brought down was fifteen years' transportation.

His second crime was to kill and remove a sheep carcass, the property of Mrs Hannah Green. The Leicestershire Mercury newspaper reported some three weeks after the crime had been committed:

The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties (Leicester, England), Saturday, January 22, 1848; pg. 3; Issue 603. *British Library Newspapers, Part III: 1741-1950.*

"Loughborough

Another committal for Sheepstealing. – About three weeks ago, a sheep belonging to Mrs. Green (who resides between Blackbrook toll-gate and Whitwick), was slaughtered, the carcass [sic] and heart being taken away, and the head, skin, and entrails left in the field. Information was given to P.C. Beales, who has acted with his usual skill and diligence in the matter, and on Friday the 14th instant, succeeded in discovering a large portion of, there is no doubt, the stolen sheep, in the house of a man named William Branson, of Whitwick. Branson and Samuel Scattergood (better known as "Smocky," and formerly of Sheepshead, but who has been latterly living with Branson, "without any visible means of subsistence,") were apprehended the same day, and on Saturday were committed for trial, by R. C. Colville, Esq., M.P."

The same newspaper briefly reported on the outcome of Scattergood and Branson's trial:

Leicester Journal, and Midland Counties General Advertiser (Leicester, England), Friday, March 17, 1848; pg. 1; Issue 5211. *British Library Newspapers, Part V: 1746-1950.*

"Leicestershire Adjourned Epiphany Sessions.

Wm Braunstone [sic] and Samuel Scattergood, were charged with stealing on December 31, at Belton, a lambhog, the property of Hannah Green, and were sentenced to fifteen years transportation."

Both men served less than two years of their respective sentences before being selected among the first 75 convicts to be transported to the newly designated Swan River Penal Colony. Numbered convicts 1 and 3 of the 75, no evidence can be found of the men maintaining contact after arrival in the colony, with Samuel making his life in Fremantle and William living in Perth until the late 1850s before moving to New Norcia and Bindoon from the early 1860s through to at least the mid-1870s, (as evidenced by the birth records for William's nine children).

Samuel's physical description as written in the convict register was: Height 5' 9"; Light brown hair, blue eyes, thin visage, fair, tanned complexion, stout to middling appearance; Marks - Man and Woman, 2 stars, 1 dog, ST 1838 on right arm, half-moon and seven stars, an anchor,

heart, spade, club and diamond, IMB on left arm. The character book of 1850 records Samuel's age as being 32 years.

Samuel received his ticket of leave on 4 June 1851 and the same year married Honora Mulcreary (variously recorded as Mulcrevy and Mulgrady) in Fremantle, Honora having arrived aboard the first immigrant ship *Sophia* on 27 July 1850. Around this time Samuel began using the aliases Joseph Samuel Thompson or Samuel Joe Thompson, and his first three children's births were registered under the name Thompson (Mary Anne, John Samuel and Elizabeth), however, the following three (Samuel, Johanna and Louisa) were recorded as Scattergood. Samuel received his conditional pardon on 8 July 1854 after the birth of his first two children. He did not live to see the birth of his youngest child, dying on 25 April 1862, aged 45 years.

In 1908 a Kalgoorlie 'Sun' newspaper harking back to the days of convictism in Western Australia, erroneously named the first Swan River Penal Colony convict as "Thomas" Scattergood. This misnomer was recycled through various later publications between 1911 and 1925 and the tale embellished to provide Scattergood with the occupation of dentist and a daughter named Polly, both untrue as far as the records show. No advertisements for a dentist named Scattergood can be found.

Hugh Kalyptus concocted a story for the *Western Mail*, of 23 October 1919, under the title:

EARLY WESTERN AUSTRALIA. PERTH'S FIRST DENTIST. A NOTORIOUS CRIMINAL -

"True to his name, convict number one turned out a good citizen. After completing his sentence. Thomas Scattergood married a buxom young Irish immigrant, and reared a large family of muscular boys and bonnie girls in their well-ordered home in King-street, on the block upon which Messrs. G Wood, Son and Co.'s warehouse now stands, and which in those days was known as Stanton's corner. Miss Polly Scattergood was the belle of her time. Thomas established himself as a repairer of umbrellas and an extractor of teeth performing the work of both departments of his profession by the aid of only one implement, which was a pair of cobbler's pincers... Perth boys of the sixties will remember the imposing sign board of Perth' first dentist, which was inscribed as follows:

*Thomas Scattergood -
Makes everything good.
Umbrellas repaired and
Teeth extracted while you wait."*

Scattergood's occupation as a dentist in Perth in the 1860s is certainly untrue given that the original convict #1, Samuel Scattergood had died in 1862. Panel 35 of the Welcome Walls in Fremantle records that Samuel is buried in St. Patrick's Cemetery. This was likely part of the Skinner Street cemetery which operated between 1852 and 1899. The remains of around 800 burials still exist beneath what are now the playing fields of John Curtin College of the Arts in East Street, Fremantle.

Samuel's wife outlived him by twenty years - Honora Thompson died in her bed 3 September 1884, aged 62 years (BDM WA regn no 12803). Reported by *The Daily News*, on Thursday 4 September 1884:

“Yesterday afternoon a decrepid [sic] old woman, named Honora Thompson, was found dead in her bed. No inquest was held, as Dr. Stevens gave a medical certificate to the effect that the cause of death was “natural decay.” The deceased was the wife of the first Imperial prisoner that arrived in this Colony, whose name was Scattergood, but when he died, she married again, and survived her second husband who died some time ago.”

No record has been found of a second marriage for Honora. The name Thompson is more likely to be from one of Samuel’s aliases, Joseph Samuel or Samuel Joseph Thompson.

Their first-born child, daughter Mary Anne died aged 18 years in 1870. Their second son Samuel born in 1857 lived for just eleven days. Son John Samuel died aged 39 years in 1892. It is not known what happened to Elizabeth born in 1855, however the youngest two daughters, Johanna and Louisa married and had children, some of whose descendants have created family trees detailing their direct connection to WA’s first convict Samuel Scattergood.

According to descendant, Kathleen Rebecca Ridgwell:

“Honora is said to have run / worked in a brothel which she in turn had her children work in – so there could be unknown offspring. Samuel was sent to Australia as a convict because he stole a sheep in Leicester. Her daughter Louisa Thompson married convict John Blunt who changed his name to Lloyd. The story goes that John pushed Louisa down the stairs, she died and the kids were sent to an orphanage. Louisa had another daughter named Margaret Barbra Lloyd in 1892. Margaret is my great grandmother.”

BDM WA records confirm that Louisa Thompson married John Lloyd in Jarrahdale in 1884, (regn no 5868). The records further show that Louisa and John had seven children all born in and around Jarrahdale between 1885 and 1898, the last, daughter Nora, being born in Sawyer’s Valley in 1901. Four of the children died aged 2 years or younger. There is no apparent record of the birth of a Margaret Barbra Lloyd in 1892 (Kathleen’s ancestor).

Certainly, a death is registered for a Louisa Lloyd, aged 37 in 1903, in Fremantle, (BDM regn no 2123), with parents listed as Samuel and Norah Malcrevia. This evidence fits with Kathleen’s family information. According to the Fremantle Prison convict database, convict John Blunt, #6508, arrived aboard the convict transport *York* on 31 December 1862. Notes indicate that in November 1878 he departed for South Australia. He had been awarded his Certificate of Freedom on 23 June 1869.

So, was Samuel Scattergood, convict #1 sent to Western Australia, a “notorious criminal” as jokingly suggested by Hugh Kalyptus in his writings 100 years ago? Samuel’s crime of killing a sheep on New Year’s Eve 1847 with friend William Branson was likely committed to provide a celebratory feed in the height of winter in a rural village when times were tough. He had served his sentence for the previous conviction of stealing a grafting tool and nothing else in the records suggests that Samuel was either violent or a habitual criminal. His wife Honora’s good character however is highly debatable and on this subject the jury is still out!

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