

Report on Michelle Urban talk on Jewish Convicts

by Joanne Hyland

The second part of Michelle Urban's fascinating talk about Jewish convicts shows links to a prominent footballing family, the Krakouers, as well as to Elias Lapidus, Theodore Krakouer's business partner.

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

Sentenced to 15-years servitude for stealing money and clothing, Theodore Krakouer landed in Fremantle in 1851 on the *Mermaid*. For a time, he and Elias LAPIDUS, 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 Jewesses, arrived in the colony from England and were employed by the two men. Brina bore Theodore 9 children, 6 sons and 3 daughters, making the Krakouers WA's second largest Jewish family. Theodore KRAKOUER died 10 May 1877 in the Lunatic Asylum at the age of 57.

As with the Samsons, their identification with Judaism did not extend beyond their own children, as none of them married a Jewish partner.

The Krakouer sons were men of stamina and enterprise who participated in the exploitation of resources in the interior of the colony. Abraham, the oldest, was a storekeeper and teamster who was credited with traversing the overland route from the port of Albany to Perth in the record time of 22 days. He was one of the first teamsters to get supplies, including liquor, through to the Coolgardie diggings early in 1894. With two of his brothers, Rudolph and Raphael, he built hotels in Coolgardie and Norseman, another goldmining centre.

Subsequently Raphael and Abraham operated hotels in the newly exploited Collie coalfield, both of them becoming members of the local council, and Abraham the mayor. Rudolph Krakouer acquired a reputation as an athlete and sportsman, but his bushcraft and civic activities brought him greater acclaim. He and David, the youngest of the Krakouer boys, were members of the party of four who explored an alternative, and for anyone in the south-west districts of the colony, a shorter route to the eastern goldfields. They achieved their success in 1893 soon after Bayley's discovery of the eastern goldfields captured attention in Western and Eastern Australia. Rudolph and David's claim to fame is the establishment in 1893 of the Holland Track to the Goldfields from the end of the railway line at Broomehill, which involved surveying and clearing over 500 km of virgin country. Despite Rudolph Krakouer being the main organiser and financier of the expedition, John Holland, who was also on the expedition, was later able to claim most of the credit, and the Track is named after him.

The brothers married indigenous women, and ran a string of hotels from Collie to Norseman. Rudolph then associated himself with his brothers in their goldfields hotel ventures, and when the others moved to Collie he remained in control of the Royal Hotel in Norseman. Rudolph

became an identity in the town where his many public responsibilities included that of trustee of the local Masonic Lodge, an interesting office for the son of a convict.

The name of KRAKOUER lives on with some well-known football players who are among their descendants, notably Phil and Jim.

LAPIDUS, Elias. 1818, jeweller, literate, receiving stolen goods 14 yrs, 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. Ester (nee ISRAEL - sister of Brina Krakouer) and wife of LAPIDUS - who subsequently married James SARGENT of Fremantle.

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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