

MICHAEL SOLOMON

Was Michael “the black sheep” of the family?

by Kevin Potter (great grandson of Michael Solomon)



Michael Solomon second son of Judah and Esther Solomon born England 1819.

When Judah was transported from England in 1819 on his journey to the other side of the world his wife, Esther was pregnant with Michael who was born shortly after his departure. Michael was the youngest of the eight children.

A great deal has been written about the Solomon brothers when they were transported as convicts to Van Diemen’s Land. Records available detail almost every part of their lives. Isaac, the first son, and Joseph, his illegitimate son, also do well in recorded history. However not a lot is recorded or known about Michael, Judah’s second son.

On 29 December 1829, **Michael Solomon** at the age of 10 arrived in Hobart Town on the brig ‘*Deveron*’. He was sent to his father whom he had never seen. *I wonder how Michael would have felt?* Michael lived with his father for six years before leaving for the new settlement of Port Phillip.

Michael (now 16) arrived at Port Phillip on the “Adelaide” 19 December 1835 and settled at Solomon’s Station where he stayed for eleven years. Michael returned to Hobart Town and on June 6 1840 married Sarah Solomon, eldest daughter of Henry Solomon. Henry a jeweller, silversmith and tobacconist established a business at 14 Argyle Street. Michael was 21, Sarah was a minor. They were married according to Jewish rites in the Synagogue. It was one of the first Jewish marriages to be celebrated in Van Diemen’s Land.

Michael and Sarah returned to Port Phillip and apparently resided there until the great economic slump 1841-1842. Michael was declared insolvent and his property subject to compulsory acquisition.

At the age of 23, the marriage failed and Michael returned to Hobart sometime between 1842 and 1847. He was arrested for extensive burglary of the premises of Mr. Benjamin of Victoria House Liverpool Street. Reading the account of his arrest in the “*Hobart Town Courier*” Saturday 5 December 1846 one can’t help wondering if justice was served.

On January 4 1847 he was sentenced to fifteen years, to serve a Period of Labour of twenty-one months at Salt Water River on the Tasman Peninsular, Avoca, Fingal, Sorell, Buckland, St Marys Pass, Rocky Hills, and St. Peters Pass.

While working as a convict at St. Peters Pass, he met a 16-year-old girl named Elizabeth Salmon who eventually would become my great grandmother. Elizabeth must have brought some degree of normality and purpose into his life, *or at least I would like to think so*. On 25 December 1852, Elizabeth and Michael had a baby daughter, Rosa.

However, problems still seem to be a part of their lives as during this period Michael had further trouble with the law and appeared before the Court on several occasions. One police record dated 31 October 1854. *Oatlands Court: Misconduct in having an unmarried female living with him for immoral purposes. Severely admonished.* This was apparently Elizabeth Salmon.

In 1854 the divorce of Michael and Sarah was finalised in Hobart Town according to Jewish religious law. Sarah at that time was still residing at Port Phillip and apparently never returned to Hobart Town.



Elizabeth Solomon

In 1856 Michael received a free pardon and one year later on 13 October 1857, he married Elizabeth Salmon (aged 21). The marriage was performed in the Presbyterian Church at Oatlands by the Rev. L.M. Campbell.

Michael's father, Judah died 18 February 1856 and the signature on the death certificate was that of Michael Solomon (son) of Oatlands.

Michael was the only one of Judah's children not mentioned in his will but it can be reasonably assumed that Judah had provided some funds for Michael to make a new start for. In 1856, Michael was a freeholder at Oatlands and during the period 1858-67 Michael owned several properties in the Oatlands and Tunbridge District. The family lived at Oatlands from 1861-67. Michael and Elizabeth had five children all born at Oatlands, son Michael died in 1855 aged one; Rosa 1852; Joseph 1858; Mary (my grandmother) 1861; Albert 1864.

It was during 1867 that another catastrophe must have occurred in Michael's life for there is no record of property in his name at this time. After eleven years in the Oatlands District the family moved to a new location and I guess new challenges. They moved to the Fingal Valley and during 1867-68 Michael was leasing grazing land at Break O Day. Elizabeth died at Fingal on 9 March 1868, aged 32, she died the year that the family moved to the Fingal area. Elizabeth is buried alongside her infant son, Michael in the General Cemetery Oatlands. My grandmother, Mary was 7 at the time.

On 27 July of the same year at the Cullenswood Church, Michael (now aged 49) married Mary Ann Canham (aged 21) of St. Marys.

During 1869-70 the family lived at Fingal and in 1873-74 they were renting a house and land at the property "Killymoon". Their next move was to Mangana where they rented from 1875 -1879.

Sadly, it would appear that Michael's problems were not over as he had further trouble with the law at Fingal in 1880.

Michael Solomon died at Mangana on 30 December 1899, at the age of 84 and is buried in the Fingal Cemetery.

Michael who came from a family of great wealth died a pauper yet five years earlier in 1894 Joseph, his half-brother, who had been left Judah's fortune died and bequeathed it to his nephew, Judah's grandson, Samuel Benjamin. **Was Michael the black sheep or the unrecognised prodigal son?** I leave it for others to decide.