

Croker Prize for Biography

Entry 1520

**My Immigrant's Story –
Jane Gould/Higgins**

MY IMMIGRANT'S STORY - Jane Gould/Higgins

South Australia was settled, after a period of exploration, and the Whale hunting of the early 1800s, when the South Australian Colonisation Act 1834 was passed to enable the establishment of a colony in South Australia based on free settlement rather than convict labour; and political and religious freedoms. (1) South Australia was to be a utopia for free settlers only. The first colonists would ideally consist mainly of business men and pastoralists from England, with some necessary labourers thrown in . The initial migrant ships left England for South Australia in 1836. Colonel William Light arrived aboard the 'Rapid' and set about surveying the coastal and inland areas for a suitable site to locate the capital city. He later nominated Adelaide and Port Creek as suitable; by October of that year settlers had arrived at Holdfast Bay aboard the 'Africaine' and 'Buffalo'.

On Wednesday, 30th June, 1847 there was published in the South Australian Register 'An Address to the Starving or Suffering Millions of Great Britain and Ireland' by John Stephens, Editor and Proprietor of the Adelaide Observer and the South Australian Register; urging the emigration of skilled workmen, labourers, artisans and contractors (2).

Eight years later, when my 2nd Great Grandmother, Jane Higgins, arrived from County Kildare in September, 1855 as part of the Female Emigration Scheme; the authorities in South Australia were getting thoroughly fed up with the numbers of emigrants, especially females, being 'dispatched in direct opposition to their instructions'; and also that 'they shipped for Port Adelaide great numbers of persona who had applied for passages to Sydney, Melbourne and Geelong' (3) A number of the unfortunate girls were interviewed 'to extract from the evidence of the female immigrants themselves, the unvarnished statement of their and our wrongs'. The female immigrants included my Jane Higgins, who had originally elected to go to Melbourne, but instead, on arriving at Plymouth, found that there was no ship for Melbourne and so was sent to Adelaide in the 'Thomas Arbuthnot', and 'thought it was no use to object'. And Jane's life went downhill from then on....

For some time there has been confusion as to Jane's correct name – she was Jane Higgins (aged 22) on the passenger list of the Thomas Arbuthnot; when she married on the 19th September, 1856, at Kapunda, to Michael Gold, she gave her name as Elizabeth Jane Higgins (4); she gave her name as Jane Gould at the birth of 5 of her children (5) but Eliza Jane was on the certificates of the other 2.(6); on her Death Certificate (7) she is again Jane.. A query to the Reference Service of the South Australian State Library regarding this matter, responded.."You can be reasonably sure you have the right woman..." (8).

On Jane's Marriage Certificate she gives her occupation as Servant; possibly, being Irish, she was working on a farm when she met Michael Gould in Kapunda and they married at St. John's Church. Her father was Thomas Higgins. Michael arrived in South Australia on the Sir Thomas Gresham on 19th March, 1854(9); he accompanied his parents Patrick and Bridget Gould, also sisters Bridget and Mary, from County Clare.

Michael Gould was employed as a smelter at the Kapunda Mines for a time after their marriage; and they lived at Baker's Flat. In May of 1866 both Michael and Jane were called as witnesses in a case of burglary against a neighbour, John Lenane. The complainant, Mary Ann Russell, claimed she was at home at the time of the offense, and had seen Lenane enter, but Michael and Jane both testified that she was at their home at that time. The case was dismissed. (10) In 1866 Michael joined the Volunteer Force; in 1865, South Australia had become the first state to introduce partially paid volunteers, I can't help wondering if that

was the reason that Michael joined, although there was a large contingent from the Kapunda Mine Company.

The next few years were difficult times for Jane and the family, mainly because of Michael's inability or unwillingness to hold a job, and at least two stints in Adelaide Gaol for debt, both in 1868.

On Tuesday 21st April, 1868, Jane Gould applied to the Wallaroo Destitute Board for relief for herself and children (11). Michael had left Wallaroo, intending to go to Queensland, but was arrested for debt and sent to gaol for 40 days. The Board was not disposed to entertain the application for relief. On 28th April, Jane was granted rations for a month as her husband was still in Wallaroo gaol. In May he had been summonsed concerning an unsatisfied debt; he did not appear; described as working for the Mine Smelting Works at a wage of 4 shillings and six pence a day, he was ordered to pay 5 shillings per week.

The Wallaroo Times reported on Saturday 30th May, that a 'sad accident had occurred on Wednesday afternoon to a little girl named Gould, 8 or 9 years of age.(12) Apparently her mother was absent and she decided to light a fire as she waited for her return, her clothes caught alight. Neighbours came to her assistance, but she was very badly burnt. A Dr. Scholl attended but it was considered doubtful if she would recover. Julia Gould died at Wallaroo on 22nd June, 1868, she was 5 years old.(13) Two days later Jane had to apply to the Wallaroo Destitute Board for relief; she said her husband had returned from Adelaide after passing through Insolvent Court, (there was no mention of the death of her daughter;) but the Board refused, saying he had regular work for the past year, but had got into debt to the tune of 40 pound. (14) It seems that soon after this Michael went to Newcastle, because Jane applied to the Board once again saying he had been gone about a month, that he had worked his passage and she had not heard from him. (15) She applied for relief twice in August, also twice in September, although Michael had sent her 25 shillings; she asked if her children could be sent to school and was told to apply to the Special Magistrate. (16) She applied again on the 11th of November, but was rejected as Michael had returned from Newcastle, had been offered work at the Blinman, and an advance on his wages, but he had refused. (17)

1868 seems to have been the *annus horribilis* for the Gould family; the years before and after were largely uneventful. In 1872 and 1876 Michael was in court again through unsatisfied judgements, so he hadn't really mended his ways; in both instances it is mentioned that there were 2 children working, probably the two oldest boys, Patrick 15 and Thomas 13. Unfortunately on the 15th August, 1876, Jane Gould was brought up before F.W. Gurner J.P. on a charge of drunkenness and fined 5s. (18) I can't blame her for taking to the drink...Sons, Patrick and Thomas would later both travel to Broken Hill and marry there. Thomas later migrated (as did his brother Joseph) to Western Australia, where he died in 1924. The other children would also end up in Broken Hill over the years. Father Michael stayed behind in South Australia.

A great deal of mystery surrounds the death of Jane which occurred on the 21st February, 1884, at Cobar, N.S.W. She would have been only about 50 years of age. No one knows just what Jane was doing in Cobar. The Death Certificate states that she died of 'Serious Apoplexy' (19). There was an Inquest held before Anthony Brough 6 days later, but very little information provided. Under 'Cash or Property possessed by Deceased' answer is NIL.. My great grandmother, (Jane's daughter) Mary Jane Gould, married John Bagwell in Bourke on the 12th June, 1885 (20), and it is possible that she travelled up with one or more of her brothers, but there is no evidence that they ever stayed there for any length of time. Maybe Jane travelled with them, but why was she in Cobar, alone, at the time of her death?

Michael survived his wife by over 20 years, living some of his later years in ‘The Old Exhibition Building’ in Adelaide. His daughter in law, Lillian Gould, wife of William Christopher, called at the home on the 16th July, 1906, and she may have taken him home with her. He was about 70 years old at his death on 31st May, 1907. (21) Hopefully he was debt free.

One can only wonder how Jane Higgins’ life would have turned out had she been allowed to travel to Melbourne; and what is her correct name?

Sources:

- (1) Wikipedia – Founding of South Australia
- (2) South Australian Register, 30th June, 1847 (Trove)
- (3) South Australian Register, 6th May, 1856 (Trove)
- (4) S.A. BDM no. 74/1856
- (5) Patrick born 29th June, 1857; Thomas born 23rd May, 1859; Julia born 9th July, 1863; May Jane born 1st July, 1865 and Joseph born 30th January, 1870.
- (6) Brigit born 10th November, 1861; William Christopher born 28th December, 1872
- (7) NSW BDM 176/1884
- (8) Reply to Maralyn Gould from State Library of South Australia – AskUs
- (9) List of Emigrants on Sir Thomas Gresham arrived 19th March 1854
- (10) Kapunda Herald and Northern Intelligencer, Friday 23rd February, 1866
- (11) Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal, Saturday, 2nd May 1868 (Trove)
- (12) Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal, Saturday, 30th May, 1868 (Trove)
- (13) S.A. BDM Death Certificate 393 of 1868
- (14) Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal Saturday 27th June, 1868. (Trove)
- (15) Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal, Tuesday, 28th July, 1868 (Trove)
- (16) Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal, Saturday, 26 September, 1868 (Trove)
- (17) Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal, Wednesday, 11th November, 1868 (Trove)
- (18) Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal, Saturday, 19th August, 1876
- (19) NSW BDM Index 176/1884, Inquest 219/1884
- (20) NSW BDM Index 4201/1885
- (21) S.A. BDM Index page 345, Vol. 325