

With the exception of the county of Cumberland, it will be seen, that there are but 300 persons of the Jewish persuasion settled over the vast territory of New South Wales; and the gross number of 500 and odd souls in the county of Cumberland, we should arrange as follows :—

Married Males	60
Single "	40
Married Females	60
Single "	35
Children from 10 to 14 years	100
" 10 to 6 years	100
And under	100
Bond	

Total ... 495

Barnett Levey.

The Father of The Theatre in Australia.

By COLONEL A. W. HYMAN.

(Read before the Society, December 11, 1941.)

George Street, in the early days of Sydney, was known as Sergeant-Major's Row, from the fact that a number of senior non-commissioned officers of the New South Wales Corps resided in and around that locality. They were accustomed to add to their incomes by keeping, under license, what were then known as "grog shops." About 1807 a Sergeant Ricketts was given a lease of an allotment of 1 rood 17 perches (later known as 72 George Street) in the Row. This subsequently became the site of the first Royal Hotel. On this site Dymock's Building now stands. The present owners purchased the land in 1922 for £15,000. It was originally purchased by Alexander Riley 110 years previously for £57.

In 1817 this land was sold to Solomon Levey for £400. Solomon was a brother of Barnett Levey; both were well-known figures in the mercantile life of early Sydney. Solomon Levey was, in fact, a partner of Daniel Cooper in the then well-known business of the Waterloo Stores. Solomon Levey died in London in 1833.

Barnett Levey in 1817 moved to 72 George Street, having purchased the property from his brother. Mr. C. H. Bertie, in *The Story of the Royal Hotel and the Theatre Royal, Sydney*, writes :—

Barnett Levey was a true pioneer. He possessed initiative and force, and above all he had the unquenchable courage which defies defeat and is only conquered by the hand of death. He was a little in advance of his time, otherwise his descendants to-day would number, probably, a baronetcy in the clan and a large rent roll to support it.

THE COLCHESTER WAREHOUSE.

The *Sydney Gazette* of 20th May, 1826, records that Barnett Levey laid on the site (72 George Street) the foundation stone of a building later known as Colchester Warehouse. The paper announced that it would be a building "of great magnitude, 80 by 28 feet and 5 storeys high." A year or so later the building was completed, and Barnett Levey made the function "one of pomp and circumstance." The function was also associated with the opening of two historic Masonic Lodges, Nos. 260 and 266, now known respectively as Lodges Antiquity and Leinster Marine, the latter named after the Duke of Leinster, who was the Grand Master of Irish Freemasonry for 61 years. All the officers attended in their "greatest paraphernalia," and Worshipful Master Samuel Terry laid the foundation stone with full Masonic honours. The architect of the new building was F. H. Greenway, who had been transported to Australia. St. James', Sydney, and St. Matthew's, Windsor, are his memorials. The function is referred to in 1920 by Mr. W. Henley in his *History of Lodge Australian Social Mother* (now known as Lodge Antiquity) as follows :—

One of the most important ceremonies witnessed to date by the inhabitants of the town of Sydney was performed by the Worshipful Master and Brethren of Lodge 260, in conjunction with some of the Brethren of Lodge 266.

This event is of great historic interest to the Fraternity in this State, seeing it was the first event of its kind that had taken place in the town of Sydney; of the thousands of Masons who were acquainted with the building known as the first Royal Hotel, few were aware that it had any Masonic associations.

THE ROYAL HOTEL.

The building, well known to the last generation of Sydney citizens under the name of the Royal Hotel, was not the first Royal Hotel on the site. The first hotel was built for Barnett Levey, who was a member of Lodge 260. Four years later, namely, on 26th March, 1832, Levey opened portion of the building under the name of the Victoria Theatre. Joseph Fowles, in his well-known book, *Sydney in 1848*, relates that Mr. Levey was at that time the owner of the original Royal Hotel in George Street, and he fitted up the saloon of that establishment as a theatre, where the first specimens of the legitimate drama were exhibited in the colony. The *Sydney Gazette* of Friday, 22nd June, 1827, records a preliminary notice:—

On Monday next the first stone of Mr. Levey's new building will be laid by Mr. Samuel Terry, Master of the Grand Lodge of Australia, attended by the Brethren of the various Lodges in full Masonic costume, and they will afterwards proceed to the Sydney Hotel to partake of a dinner, which, of course, will be prepared in Mr. Cumming's best style.

In *The History of Lodge Leinster Marine*, by Messrs. Phillips and Fleming, appear the following:—

It can well be imagined that going to Lodge in those days was a very different matter to what it is now. We may be sure that the roads were none of the best, and as gas was not introduced to Australia until seventeen years after (in 1841) the lighting was indifferent. Railways and tramways were unknown and even in England the steam locomotive was regarded with grave suspicion. More than a year after the establishment of Leinster Marine Lodge, namely, in March, 1825, the *Quarterly Review* published the following paragraph:—

"We are not advocates for visionary projects that interfere with useful establishments. We scout the idea of a railroad as impracticable. What can be more palpably absurd and ridiculous than the prospects held out of locomotives travelling twice as fast as stage coaches. We should as soon expect the people of Woolwich to suffer themselves to be fired off upon one of Congreve's rockets as to put themselves at the mercy of such a machine."

Colchester Warehouse and Mill were finally completed in 1828, and on top was placed a windmill to give the motive power for the grinding. The *Sydney Gazette* of 31st December, 1827, stated that "Mr. Barnett Levey's whirl-about-thing-umbob was put in motion on the previous Christmas Day."

HOME AT WAVERLEY.

An amusing passage-at-arms took place between the editor of the *Sydney Gazette* and Levey, for in the issue of that paper of the 15th October, 1827, the editor says :—

Mr. Barnett Levey, besides the erection of this frightfully lofty temple in town, is also building a handsome dwelling house upon his estate on the South Head Road, within a few minutes walk of Bellevue, (now Waverley). As soon as the house is finished, Mr. Levey intends erecting a Church near his estate, for the benefit of the neighbourhood in that direction.

To this Levey countered in the issue of two days later :—

To the Editor of *Sydney Gazette*.—In this morning's paper you made a great error. As far as your statement goes, as to building a house on my little estate, it is true, but as to building a Church that is totally wrong. I think a grog shop would find more inside passengers on that road than a Church.

The residence which Levey built for himself and family stood in sixty acres, in a locality isolated and lonely, then known as Bellevue. He called his house "Waverley House" in compliment to the Waverley Novels, of which he was a keen student. It was from this property that Waverley (sometime the Village of Waverley) derived its name. Levey was one of the first residents in the locality. It was said Levey bought the property originally from its previous owner, W. Foreman, for a cask of Cape wine (sour), although he afterwards obtained confirmation of his title by a grant from the Government on the 19th October, 1827. A sly-grog shop in the locality was established (not by Barnett Levey), and it is said the owner was later robbed and murdered for the small sum he had in his possession. The house had a commanding view of Sydney and the ocean, and the area was bounded on the north side by the Old South Head Road, on the east by Waverley Park and its prolongation north, on the south by Birrell Street, and west by Brisbane Street.

Waverley House was demolished in 1904; it had been occupied for some years previously by the Kilburn Sisters of Charity. Prior to that it was used as a home for destitute little girls, and then in turn as a school for boys kept by a well-known local identity, a Miss Hall.

Premises known as "Eurangai" (lately the residence of the late Dr. Leslie Lamrock) now stand on the old site, which is at the corner of Old South Head Road and Pine Avenue, Waverley.

FIRST AUSTRALIAN PLAYHOUSE.

The first record of a dramatic performance in Australia was the acting of "The Recruiting Officer" by the convicts, with the permission of the Governor on June 4th, 1789. Sydney became possessed of a "theatre" in 1796, when it was opened by Robert Bidaway on 16th January, 1796, by the performance of the "Tragedy" by Edward Young with the "Hotel" as an afterpiece. The *Edinburgh Advertiser* referred to it in 1789 and states "the theatre at Botany Bay was entirely built by the convicts, and cost about £100. With singular propriety, the gallery is the largest part of the house. The admission is one shilling, which is paid either in money or in flour or meat." The Governor however, closed the theatre and ordered the building to be destroyed in 1798.—"OLD TIMES."

Messrs. G. W. S. Phillips and F. J. G. Fleming later in their book state :—

Barrington, the famous pickpocket, was one of the "bad bargains" allotted to New South Wales and to him one of the earliest histories of the Colony is assigned. He records the fact that in 1796 leave was granted to "some well-behaved convicts" to open a theatre. He was one of the players and wrote a prologue for the opening performance.

Apparently all bad characters were not included in the cast, for Barrington says, "Contrary to the practice of robbing at the theatre, they visited it, only to see, whose house they might plunder whilst they were at the play." If a man was convicted for the third time of "spending his money in an alehouse" he became an incorrigible rogue and a vagabond, and was to receive not more than twelve and not less than six months' hard labour, and as many whippings as the Superintendent of Police thought proper to prescribe.

It was especially enacted that "all prisoners and labouring persons shall not be abroad or away from their houses between the hours of eight o'clock at night and daybreak in the morning, under the penalties above described.

GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION.

A Proclamation of the Governor deprived Sydney of the distinction of owning a regular playhouse, with its company of actors and actresses. But amateurs filled the breach, and in the early years of the nineteenth century both the members of the Military Forces stationed at

Sydney and the civilian element contributed their share towards the amusement of the community in the presentation of plays. The performances were very creditable, and were attended by the Vice-Regal and the political and professional society of the day. Any large hall or suitable place was utilised that offered advantages for play-acting.

Joseph Fowles, in his book, *Sydney in 1848*, writes :—

It may not be uninteresting to trace the early, rude, and unformed efforts of the dramatic art in this Colony, through their various phases, until they reached the high position of the present day. It is needless to enter into a lengthy dissertation upon the humanizing influences which the drama exercises over mankind; the eloquence of the orator, the philosopher, the poet, and the historian is raised in its laudation; and if they fail to convince, the intense sympathy which the Theatre finds with the people is an unerring testimony of its value. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the first wretched exiles who came into the Colony should have endeavoured to relieve the monotony of a bush life and to divert their minds from brooding over unpleasant reflections, by getting up a dramatic entertainment. The scale was humble enough, consisting, in the first instance, of mere recitations from well-known authors; these subsequently grew into attempts to produce complete dramas; and singular to relate, in 1826, during the dynasty of General Darling the Debtors' Room in the Sydney Gaol was turned into a Temple of Thespis; the debtors' room afforded the arena; and persons of the highest standing in the town were not ashamed to witness the crude representations of these dramatic enthusiasts.

THEATRICAL COMPANY.

Levey set on foot a scheme to erect the first real theatre in Sydney, and the public was invited to take shares of £50 or £5 each in a Tontine Company. In January, 1828, the necessary canvas scenery for the theatre had been procured, and in the following months the enterprise made rapid progress. The building was at the rear of 72 George Street, Sydney, adjoining Colchester House. By March, 1828, the full number of 200 shares were taken up.

In a letter dated 4th June, 1828, from a Mr. F. Garling to Mrs. Piper, there appears this passage :—

The day before yesterday Doctor Moran, Miss Phillips and myself went all over Mr. Barnett Levey's Mill. It is an immense building; he showed us into part of it and we went to the very top where the works are and walked outside—the prospect from

there was beautiful—we could see the whole of the Town and Mountains [apparently the Blue Mountains] all round. The people appeared like children walking along, the height is so great. It was well worth seeing. Mr. Levey then took us to the Theatre, which is getting on fast. We saw the drop curtain being painted in high colors including scenes from Tragedy & Comedy. There will be a famous ball room, and other rooms too numerous to mention.

LICENSE FROM GOVERNOR.

In June, 1829, Levey obtained a license from the Governor of the day to open a concert for vocal and instrumental music, and for the performance of plays. Colonel Allen, of the 57th Regiment, gave him permission to use the Band of the Regiment at the first concert, held at the Royal Hotel in George Street. Plays and other entertainments were given at intervals. It is on record that at the final performance given on 31st August, 1829, Levey sang "My Love is Gone to Botany Bay." The *Sydney Gazette* of 31st August had a paragraph stating that it was "the eve of the day on which he [Levey] is to deliver up possession of the premises to the shareholders of the Tontine," for the waters of financial adversity were washing round poor Barnett Levey, and he finally decided to sell the Royal Hotel. On the 14th December, 1830, Levey's career as its proprietor came to an end.

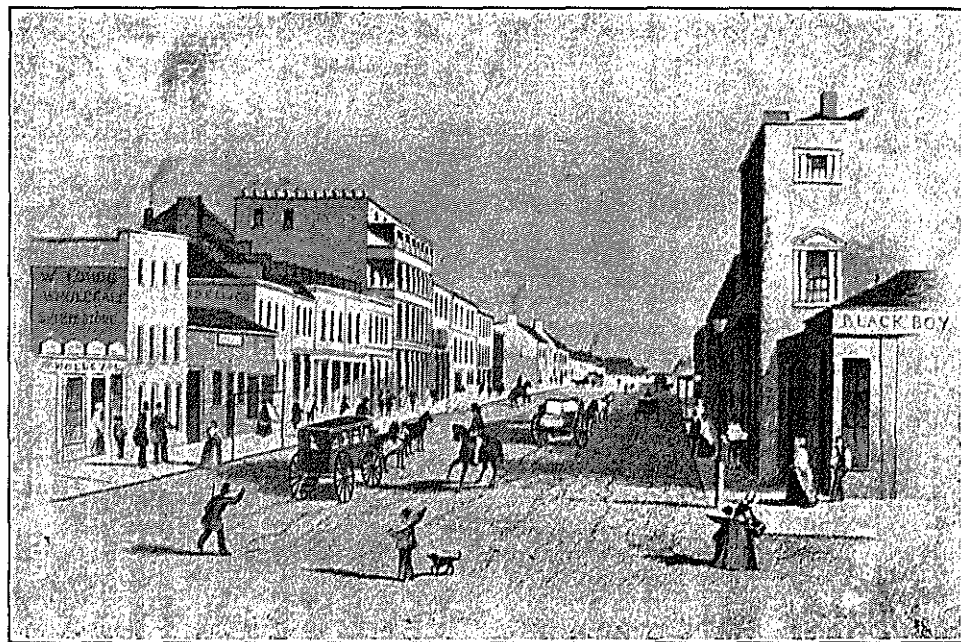
The *Gazette* of 22nd January, 1831, stated :—

It is much to be regretted that Mr. Levey should not have met with the encouragement which his enterprising disposition would seem almost to command. Men are estimated by their success and those who now acclaim against Mr. Levey's folly in erecting so capacious an edifice would have lauded his daring spirit had the results of his labours been commensurate with his enterprises.

How true this is to-day, although these were the words of an editor one hundred years ago.

SECOND ATTEMPT.

The windmill was taken down soon afterwards, but Levey, with a large young family dependent upon him, could not (so Mr. Bertie writes) afford to be idle, and so in 1832 he was in the limelight again with another Royal Theatre project, which he re-opened by a series of "At Homes." The charge for admission was fixed at 5/- per



GEORGE STREET, SYDNEY,
Showing the Royal Hotel (tall building with pillars at left), about 1853.

head. Levey entertained and carried out the whole performance himself ! He was thoughtful in one respect (so again writes Mr. Bertie), as half an hour was allowed as an interval between the parts to permit the audience to liquefy their palates ! The entertainment closed with the singing of the National Anthem; the Chief Justice, the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General of the day and Dr. Harris joined heartily in the chorus. It is stated that about 500 persons were present at the first performance. The new theatre was still in the old building at the rear of the hotel which had been erected by Levey in the days of his prosperity.

The structure, according to a publication of the day, *Drama and Music*, contained a pit, two tiers of boxes and a gallery capable of holding from 900 to 1000 persons. Levey was a good mimic, and also a fair comic and patriotic vocalist. For some years prior to becoming proprietor of the theatre he gave entertainments after the style of the elder Charles Matthews. It was on his return from a visit to England that he had resolved on this other theatre; before commencing, what then, as now, was a very responsible undertaking, it was necessary to be assured of a license, for which he had previously applied. These days play-houses are more readily built, as it is taken a matter of course that licenses for performances will be granted. In the early days of the colony, however, no such certainty existed; the Governor's will in this respect was law, from which there was no appeal, and the light in which the boon was granted will best be understood by giving Levey's announcement (of the fact), which appeared in the *Sydney Herald* of 23rd August, 1832, and subsequent issues of that and other journals. It ran as follows :—

THEATRE ROYAL, SYDNEY.

His Excellency the Governor having most graciously been pleased to grant me a License for a Theatre in Sydney—for which I shall for ever feel grateful—and as the fitting-up of an Establishment of this description will be attended with considerable expense as to Scenery Properties, Dresses and Decorations, the Proprietor proposes shortly to give his

"AT HOME"

to which His Excellency has also been pleased to grant permission, for the purpose to enable the Advertiser to accomplish his object in view. I am satisfied that the public are aware of my losses in

attempting to introduce into Australia a species of Amusements, both moral and entertaining, and that too at my individual expense.

The very liberal patronage of a generous public the Advertiser does not question, and he respectfully begs to acquaint them that for a few nights only he intends being "At Home" prior to the opening of the Theatre Royal, Sydney. Due notice will be given as to the night of entertainment.

The entertainments referred to above came off on the appointed day in George Street, and consisted of a series of "Sketches á la Matthews," thirteen in number, with nine songs—patriotic, sentimental and comic—thrown in. No wonder the following postscript was attached to the programme: "On so arduous an undertaking, it is hoped no repetition of songs will be called for"! In addition to the lengthy programme, which Levey gave alone, the string Band of the 57th Regiment played musical selections. To sit out an entertainment which (with the exception of the string band) was carried out by one performer is a tax to which modern audiences are seldom subjected!

LEGITIMATE DRAMA.

In the *Sydney Herald* of 25th December, 1832, appeared this notice:—

TO THE POETS OF AUSTRALIA.

Barnett Levey offers a silver medal, with a suitable inscription engraved thereon, for an approved Opening Address to be spoken on the first night of opening the Theatre Royal, Sydney, composed and written by a Native of the Colony and to be submitted for the approval to the Committee of Management, who are gentlemen of talent, and of the first respectability.

The 26th December, 1832, may be regarded as the birthday of all legitimate drama in Australia, for on that night "Blackeyed Susan" was played by Levey's company, in which Douglas Jerrold played the leading part. Levey's name should therefore be always associated in Australia with this very fine achievement, for that is what it was, considering the difficulties of those early days in Sydney.

The *Sydney Herald* of Thursday, 27th December, 1832, stated:—

The Theatre Royal, Sydney, opened on Wednesday night, after an arduous struggle on the part of Mr. B. Levey, to introduce the drama into this colony, with the nautical melodrama in three acts

of "Blackeyed Susan" or "All in the Downs" and concluded with the Comic Farce of "Monsieur Tonson." Both pieces were well performed and the characters admirably sustained.

The issue of the same newspaper of 31st December, 1832, gives this statement about the place of performance :

It had been found impossible to prepare the large Theatre by the Christmas holidays, and consequently, a stage was fitted up in the saloon of the Royal Hotel, and a tier of boxes erected with the necessary seats in the pit.

FIRST PERFORMANCE.

The *Sydney Gazette* of 1833 published the license issued by the Governor, Sir Richard Bourke, permitting Barnett Levey to institute dramatic performances as a regular thing, with the restriction that he would only perform such pieces as were licensed in England by the Lord Chamberlain. The company included Messrs. Grove, Dyball, Buckingham, Mackay, Hill, Meredith, Mesdames Meredith, Lara and Dawes. In view of the space now devoted to theatrical matters, the newspapers of the time seem to have regarded the event with singular apathy. The following extract from the *Gazette* is a fair sample of the contemporary criticism then in vogue among Sydney journals :—

The Theatre Royal opened last night. "The Miller and His Men" and "The Irishman in London" were chosen for the opening night. It may be generally said of the first piece that it was rather run through than acted. The burning of the mill failed; pistols were fired off and one squib in miniature as the curtain fell, hid the confusion of those behind it. "The Irishman in London" made some amends for the deficiencies of the first piece. Mr. Hill was a fine specimen of the Irishman. Old Frost was ably sustained by Knowles, who ought to assume this line of business.

Though the music, scenery and costumes in those days were often inadequate, these effects were well carried out, considering the material at hand. Messrs. Edwards and Sippe led the orchestra successfully, Messrs. Dudderbridge Zitchet and Winstanley were the scenic artists, and Mr. Aldred costumier. The first manager was Mr. Meredith, who was celebrated for his impersonations of old men.

The Theatre Royal was engaged for amateur theatricals several times in the course of the decade, and on 15th May,

1836, His Majesty's servants of the 4th Regiment performed under Barnett Levey's management the melodrama of "Banfylde More Carew" and gave a miscellaneous entertainment of band music, songs and comic scenes for the benefit of the Schools of Industry. All the female characters were sustained by men. Three weeks afterwards an additional performance of three light comedies was given to augment the funds of the Sydney Dispensary; afterwards the Sydney Infirmary and the Sydney Hospital.

LAST YEARS.

At a general meeting of the shareholders of the Australian Gas Light Company held at the Royal Hotel on the 29th June, 1836, the Directors appointed included Barnett Levey.*

The stage, however, was now set for the last curtain on the career of Barnett Levey. On the 2nd October, 1837, this gallant spirit set out on its final voyage. After his many trials and tribulations, he passed away at 72 George Street, aged only 39 years, leaving a widow and four infant children. His will, dated the day prior to his decease, and his confused signature, would appear to indicate that death came suddenly.

At the Theatre Royal performances were carried on from October, 1837, for some time by his widow. It was closed abruptly on 22nd March, 1838.

On St. Patrick's Day, 1840, a fire destroyed the Royal Hotel and the Theatre Royal built by Barnett Levey. Mr. Fowles records the occurrence :—

A drunken carter, who had been indulging in an adjoining stable, and the straw igniting, the immense stack of buildings was speedily in flames.

A grand ball was taking place at Government House when the fire broke out; and Colonel Barney, Capt. Collins, Lieut. Lugard, and other Officers, rushed out in their gay attire and lent their aid in extinguishing the flames. By levelling several tenements in the rear of Mr. Belmore's residence, Lieut. Lugard, in all probability saved adjoining premises, from being consumed; and Colonel Barney anticipating, from a slight breeze to the southward, that the flames from the Hotel might communicate to other buildings, had a train ready laid to blow up the two first houses, and thereby save the rest from destruction; but this was rendered unnecessary by the providential lulling of the wind.

**Vide Australian* of 5th July, 1836.

Thus ended in smoke all the dreams of Barnett Levey, with a considerable financial loss to all concerned.

However, a new Royal Hotel soon rose from the ashes of the old. In the new Royal Hotel the first Municipal Council of Sydney, which was elected on the 1st November, 1842, held its first meeting. It continued to meet there until January, 1843. During the Great War, 1914-1918, the Royal Hotel building was occupied as a club (founded by Dr. Mary Booth and a committee) for returned soldiers. As a club, it was opened by the then Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson.

The author desires to acknowledge the assistance he has received in the writing of this paper from Mr. C. H. Bertie, whose book, *The Story of the Royal Hotel and the Theatre Royal, Sydney*, has been drawn on for many of the facts; from Mr. F. D. S. Bell, City of Sydney Librarian; from Miss Ida Lesson, B.A., Mitchell Librarian, and the staff of the Mitchell Library; and also from Mr. F. J. C. Fleming, Secretary of Lodge Leinster Marine, and Mr. J. Drury, Secretary of Lodge Antiquity. By courtesy of Mr. Drury, the author was permitted to peruse the Minute Book (1820) of Lodge Antiquity.

The writer of this paper is a great-grand-nephew of Barnett Levey.

The New South Wales Jewish Association.

By the late PERCY J. MARKS.

(Read before the Society, December 11, 1941, by
Miss Hilda V. Marks.)

The need for a centre for Jewish activities in Sydney—social, literary and otherwise—was recognised long before the inception of the present Maccabean Institute. In 1902 an attempt was made to supply this want by the formation of The New South Wales Jewish Association. At a meeting held on Sunday, April 7th, 1902, the following resolution was carried: "That it is desirable to form a Society for the promotion of social and intellectual inter-