

The 100 Jews of S.S. "Palambam" in 1832, Rectification of an Error.

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF TASMANIAN JEWRY.

by G. F. J. BERGMAN, D.Ec., LL.B.

In an article entitled "Tasmanian Jewry, Past and Present", published in the "Australian Jewish Forum", April, 1944, the Reverend J. Ansbacher, who was then Minister of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation, wrote:—

"On the size of the Jewish population the following figures are available from the Town Archives:—

1832:—100 Jews arrived in S.S. 'Palambam' from England".

Figures following this statement gave statistics about the size of the Jewish population in Tasmania from 1837 to 1891 which had been compiled from the Census cards.

The statement about the 100 Jews of the "Palambam" was accepted and literally repeated in subsequent articles about Hobart Jewry by Mr. Herbert I. Wolff¹ and the late Rabbi L. M. Goldman.²

I, for my part, have always treated the story of the "100 Jews in the 'Palambam'" with some suspicion for the following reasons:—

Firstly, the round figure of 100 seemed improbable and secondly I asked myself:—If 100 Jews had come to Hobart in 1832, how could the Census of 1837 show a total of only 132 Jews in the whole of Tasmania? There must have been in Tasmania, which had seen Jewish convicts and free settlers from the very beginning of the settlement in 1801, certainly more than just a handful of Jews before 1832!

Whilst doing some research work at the Tasmanian State Archives in February, 1962, I found my suspicions confirmed and was able to clear up a regrettable error.

There is in the Tasmanian State Archives, (not Hobart "Town" Archives, as alleged by Rev. Ansbacher), a "file" referring to the Solomon family and other Tasmanian Jews. In this file I found also a typewritten statement, compiled by an unknown author, containing some historical data about the Jewish Community, including the statistics quoted by Reverend Ansbacher, starting with the "100 Jews of the 'Palambam' in 1832".

It was quite obvious that Reverend Ansbacher had read and copied this statement and that subsequent authors

had accepted it. A check, however, of the relevant documents at the Tasmanian State Archives and the Mitchell Library in Sydney has proved that the statement about the "100 Jews of the 'Palambam'" was without any foundation. To avoid further trouble the Chief Archivist in Hobart, on my request, has put a warning note in the file.

How many Jews did actually come to Hobart in the "Palambam"? This vessel of 394 tons left London on 24th August, 1832³ with 116 passengers, 3 of whom were cabin, the remaining 113, steerage.⁴ The ship arrived in Hobart Town on December 13 or 14, 1832.

There are two documents in the Tasmanian State Archives about the ship's arrival in Hobart Town:—

1—The "Report of the arrival at the Port of Hobart Town of the ship "Palambam", 14th December, 1832."⁵
and

2—The "Passenger List" of the ship "Palambam" in the "List of arriving vessels in Hobart Town" of 1832."⁶

Document No. 1 shows that of the 116 passengers, only 14 adults alighted at Hobart Town. Of these 14 persons only 5 seem to have been of the Jewish faith. These were: Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Benjamin and 2 small children, and Mrs. Esther Solomon and her two daughters, Sarah and Rebecca. Esther Solomon was the wife of Judah Solomon who, in 1820, had arrived as a convict.

These 5 were definitely Jews. I am unable to say whether two other passengers, Messrs. G. E. and H. Sadgrin, who also remained in Hobart, were Jewish.

All the remaining 102 passengers, of whom 25 were probably Jewish, went on to Sydney.

Having now reduced the number of Jews arriving in Tasmania in the "Palambam" from 100 to 5 or 7 and by thus correcting a misleading error, I had to look for the source of the wrong information. There was no mention of the "100 Jews" in the Hobart Town newspapers of the time. I found however the source in a notice in the Launceston "Independent" of 15th December, 1832, which reported:—"The 'Palambam' has brought to our shores upwards of a hundred Jews".⁷

A report from Hobart that there were many Jews on the ship had obviously led to this exaggerated statement. It is not improbable, however, if we believe a strongly anti-Semitic article which appeared some days later in the Hobart Town "Colonial Times"⁸ that the Jews in the

"Palambam" originally intended to settle in Hobart, but changed their minds, when arriving in Hobart Town.

This article reads:—

"Is it true that the importation of Jews by the Palambam, is owing to strong representation made by the bearded fraternity here, to their brethren of Monmouth Street, and the Seven Dials? It appears they have informed them of the great advantages afforded to usurers in the Colony, and of their anxious desire to hand over their money connexions to them, receiving not IOU's, because such humbugs are only useful on "some occasions", but valuable consideration. The Shylocks, we have, might have been content with fobbing their pelf and sneaking out of the Colony, without burthening us with more of the same race, who like incubuses have fastened on, or who rather as vultures, have preyed on its vitals.

Is it true that the recent live cargo by the Palambam, finding the market here already forestalled by the beardless Shylocks, with whom the Colony swarms, have wisely determined to proceed to New South Wales, justly considering that a better harvest awaits them there than here by reason that the greatest part of our wealth is regularly leaving us for that well-governed, thriving Colony? When will these things mend?"

Such anti-Semitic outbursts were fortunately rare in the Australian Press of this period. This article, too, leaves however no doubt that the report about the "100 Jews of the 'Palambam'" was untrue. The final confirmation came from a check of the ship's passenger list, when the "Palambam" arrived in Sydney Harbour on January 10, 1833.³

The Sydney Tide Surveyors' report shows the names of the following steerage passengers who have "Jewish" names as alighting in Sydney:—

- 1 Catherine Phillips.
- 2 Elisha Hayes.
- 3 Elizabeth Hayes, his wife.
- 4 Marrienne Hayes, their daughter.
- 5 Mary Ann Hayes, 28 years old.
- 6 Henry Simmons, bricklayer.
- 7 Sarah Simmons, his wife.
- 8 John Simmons, their son, 2 years old.
- 9 Ann Simmons, an infant.
- 10 John Barnett, Cooper.
- 11 Robert Freeman Barnett, 7 years old.
- 12 Mary Jane Barnett, 6 years old.
- 13 Israel Myers.
- 14 Esther Myers, his wife.
- 15 Emmanuel Wolfe, printer.
- 16 Abraham Moses.
- 17 Sarah Moses, his wife and an infant.
- 18 Sarah Moses, daughter, 16 years old.

- 19 Milian Moses, 9 years old.
- 20 Moses Moses, 3 years old.
- 21 Rebecca Moses.
- 22 Henry Moses, 3 years old.
- 23 Deborah Moses, 5 years old.
- 24 Hannah Moses, 2½ years old.
- 25 Norman Simon, a Rabbi.
- 26 Morice Leonard, Plasterer.
- 27 Margaret Leonard, his wife.
- 28 David Davis, Twill manufacturer.

It might be that the Hayes, Barnett and Leonard families were not Jewish. In any case, it becomes now also clear that the number of Jews on the "Palambam" was insignificant.

It is interesting to note the arrival of Norman Simon who claimed to be a "Rabbi", but nothing is heard of him afterwards in this capacity.

The shipping list also shows that the following passengers were "Bond Migrants" with a £20 bond:—

Elisha Hayes, 'Henry Simmons, Morice Leonard, Abraham Moses, Israel Myers and John Moses, and with a £10 bounty:—Catherine Phillips, Sarah Moses and Mary Ann Hayes.

The assumption that the report about the arrival of the 100 Jews in Tasmania in 1832 was true, led the late Rabbi Goldman to wrong conclusions about the size of the Jewish Community in Tasmania before 1832, when he wrote²:—

"It is apparent from the official figures of 1832 which state that 100 Jews arrived in Hobart Town on S.S. Palambam and that in 1837 there were a total of 132 Jews of whom 124 were free in the Colony that prior to 1832 there was a handful of Jews only on the island."

Now that we know that instead of 100, only 5 or 7 Jews, two of whom only were males, arrived in Hobart Town by the "Palambam" in December, 1832, we have to correct Rabbi Goldman's conclusions. Although the actual figures are not known, we might well estimate that the number of Jews in Tasmania in 1832 was at least around the hundred mark, if not more.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to acknowledge the valuable assistance given me by Messrs. Eldershaw and Stilwell, Archivists, and the Staff of the Tasmanian State Archives, Hobart, and by the Staff of the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

NOTES

1. Herbert I. Wolff, A Century of Hobart Jewry in Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal and Proceedings, Vol. II, Part I, p. 1.
2. Rabbi L. M. Goldman, The History of Hobart Jewry in Australian Jewish Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings, Vol. III, Part V, p. 209/10.
3. Report of Thos. Jeffrey, Tide Surveyor, Customs House, Sydney of 10/1/1833 about the ship "Palambam". (Mitchell Library).
4. Hobart Town Courier, Vol. V, No. 333 of December 14, 1832.
5. File C.S.O. 1/632 No. 14277/1. (Tasmanian State Archives).
6. List of arriving vessels in Hobart Town, Vol I. Arrival 1/1a (18/1/1830-31. 10/1833) p. 174. (Tasmanian State Archives).
7. The Independent, Launceston, Vol. II, No. 91, of December 15, 1832.
8. The "Colonial Times" Hobart Town, Vol. 17, No. 869, of December 18, 1832 (page 2, col. 3).

Book Reviews

JOHN MONASH, by John Hetherington. Oxford University Press, pp. 30. Illustrated. 5/-.

The publishers of this series of Great Australians have so far produced twenty-four booklets devoted to the lives of eminent men and women who have left their mark on Australian history. None will doubt that this series of biographies would be incomplete if it did not include the contribution made to our national life by Sir John Monash, Australia's greatest soldier.

All the salient facts of Monash's life are collected in this brief biography. The author properly divides his material between his subject's early family life and education in Melbourne, his professional attainments after graduation as an engineer, and naturally enough, great emphasis is laid on Monash's rise to fame as Australia's military leader in World War I. The brief account concludes with a short review of Monash's work as head of the Victorian State Electricity Commission in the decade which followed the Armistice.

John Hetherington does well to underline Monash's power of leadership, his resoluteness, steadfastness and strength of mind. He depicts a man who keenly understood the special needs of his country. Perhaps much of Monash's success as a military leader is to be attributed to the fine understanding which he had of the character of the Australian soldier.