

TO RIGHT A HISTORICAL WRONG

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The aim of this brief paper is to correct some errors which have intrigued me for many years, which relate to a notable article written by E.F. Kunz (PhD Budapest) published in the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* volume VI part 5, 1968, pp. 279–283, entitled *The Rev. Isaac Friedman: a Colonial career*. The inaccuracies in the historical record have been perpetuated by a number of authors over the past 32 years; however, having now re-visited the primary sources I intend to point out how the original misinterpretations occurred and to make a plea for their correction in future publications.

My interest in this topic was first kindled when I was transcribing information from Jewish gravestones at the Melbourne General Cemetery, Carlton, in the mid-1980s, as part of an ongoing project to record all known Jewish burials throughout Australia and New Zealand.

I found three graves next to each other, in Section A, which interested me personally: Isaac Friedman (died 13 June 1875), his [second] wife, Maria (died 9 December 1880) and Frances Mathews. The inscription on the latter gravestone reads: died 5 January 1876 aged 46; daughter of the late Revd. Isaac Friedman (Hebrew name: Fraidl bat haHaver Gedalya Yitzhak).

This led me to establish that Frances Friedman had married Joseph Mathews (a distant connection on my husband's family tree), on 24 May 1864 at the Sandhurst (Bendigo) synagogue. According to their marriage certificate, Frances had been born in London ca1832, and was the daughter of Isaac Friedman, Minister, and Rebecca Netto. The marriage officiant was Isaac Friedman. Joseph and Frances Mathews produced seven children, all born at Sandhurst.

My subsequent investigations revealed that Isaac Friedman had married Rebecca Netto on 16 August 1832 at the Great Synagogue, London. The birth register of this congregation records the birth of their daughter Frances (Hebrew name: Fraidl) on 4 October [*sic*] 1832.

Which now brings us to some statements made in the article written by Dr Kunz in 1968. First, (p. 279) that among the [38] steerage passengers on board the *Enchantress* which sailed from London to Port Jackson [Sydney] via Hobart Town, arriving on 24 April 1833, were Isaac Friedman, his wife Rebecca, and *seven months old son, Francis*. The passenger list does not show the gender of any adults or children nor the words 'son' or 'daughter', and I strongly believe that it would have been most unlikely for a Jewish couple at that time to name a son Francis! Their daughter, Frances (Fraidl) would have been aged about seven months on their arrival. (Interestingly, another family on board the same ship was that of Emanuel Crabb, who arrived together with *his wife Francis [sic]* and four young children.) Kunz, in Note 1, states that

'... the family [are listed] amongst other Jewish immigrants as "British".' The copy of the passenger list I have obtained shows all as being from 'England', a quite different status.

Second, Kunz wrote (p. 279) that 'almost within a month he [Isaac Friedman] lost both his son and his wife' (see Kunz, Note 5). This statement is based on the 1844 plan of the names and dates of burials in the Jewish section of the Devonshire Street cemetery, Sydney, which simply records 'son of Freedman 24 June 1835' and 'wife of Freedman 26 August 1835'. It is my contention that this 'son of Freedman' was a second child who died at or close to birth followed two months later by the mother (a common occurrence at that time), although neither his birth nor his death are recorded in the New South Wales registration indexes. Thus, the 'unseemly' haste of Isaac to marry Maria (Miriam) Nathan on 23 December 1835 is easily explained: to provide a mother for his then-14 month old daughter Frances.

Third, (p. 280), 'in Hobart ... his four sons were born between 1840 and 1848' i.e. Moses Joseph, Solomon David, Louis, and Eller [*sic*] (see Kunz, Note 10). Kunz cites information from Dr G.F.J. Bergman from his 'List of births of the Hobart Town Hebrew Congregation'. A check of the original birth register shows that the last-named child has the Hebrew name of Ella bat [daughter of] Gedalya Yitzhak, and is therefore a girl. Ella Friedman died in Hobart on 24 January 1856 aged 8 years. Isaac and Maria Friedman had another 4 children also born in Hobart: Rebecca 1850, Ann 1852, Henry 1855, and Abraham 1858.

A final clarification is here presented regarding the name of the person who provided one of the testimonials in support of Isaac Friedman's application for naturalisation in New South Wales [granted on 20 June 1851], (see Kunz, Note 1). This is given as *Ernest Cobb*, which needs to be corrected to *Emanuel Crabb* (who later became the first secretary of the Sydney synagogue), who affirms that he arrived on the same ship in 1833 as did Isaac Friedman. An interesting note is the declaration provided by Friedman that he was 'a native of Hungaria in the Empire of Austria' (see Kunz, p. 281).

I hope that future researchers will incorporate these corrections into their work, particularly to give Frances Friedman her rightful place in history!

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