

THE MYSTERY OF THE THREE LITTLE GIRLS

5 May 1835 William Henry Sprinks married Eliza Burnett in Lambeth
13 Jul 1836 Ellen Sprinks was baptized.
10 Oct 1837 Jane Eliza Sprinks was born
c1840 The family migrated to Van Diemen's Land and settled in Hobart.
13 Nov 1841 Rosa Jessie Sprinks was born in Hobart.

Mr Sprinks and Mrs Sprinks were in business in a shop as "milliner, haberdasher and general dealer". I must assume from circumstantial evidence that it's one business, and that it's our family.

30 Sept 1842 A classified ad informed customers that Mrs Sprinks was removing her establishment from 36 Macquarie Street to "the more eligible situation" 44 Liverpool Street.
29 Apr 1843 A sale by auction of the estate of Mr Sprinks.
24 May 1843 A meeting of the Insolvency Commissioners for Hobart for the discharge of William Sprinks.
13 June 1843 William Sprinks arrives in Sydney in *Sisters* from Hobart.
(NSW State Records website under Unassisted Arrivals 1842-55.)

Jane and Ellen were placed in Bridget Stevens' school at Glenorchy. It seems that their mother paid for their schooling

29 May 1844 Rosa admitted to Hobart orphanage.

SPINKS Rosa, age 4y, mother: left colony, free, father: left colony, free, admitted 29 May 1844, discharged 09 Jan 1846, page 23. (Note the spelling.)

(Children in Queen's Orphanage, Hobart 1828-1863, compiled by Joyce Purtshcher)

11 Jan 1845 William Henry Smith (whom we know to be Sprinks) married Catherine Sawyer in Scots Church, Sydney.
9 Jan 1846 Rosa discharged from orphanage. It seems she joined her sisters in Mrs Stevens' school.
1 Apr 1846 Three people called Miss Spinks were passengers in North Briton, bound for London, accompanied by a servant.
(AOT CUS36/1/397).

This could be the same servant who misspelt Rosa's name at the orphanage; the parents would not have done so. The fact that they are called "Miss", that they were cabin passengers (i.e. not in Steerage) and that they have a servant, suggests some social status or at least an ability to pay.

Note that some of William and Catherine's children take Sprinks as a second forename.

WHAT HAPPENED?

We know what happened to William.
Was his marriage to Catherine bigamous?

On the orphanage register it says that Eliza, free, had left the colony. So where had she gone and why? There is no evidence (that I have seen) of a divorce. Did she change her name? Were she and William on the run from creditors?

And what happened to the three girls when they reached London?

We now know that Eliza Sprinks married Robert Howden in Kensington, London, on 27 November 1852. At the time she bore the surname James. Did she previously marry a Mr James? If so, when and where?

We also find a marriage for Jane Eliza Sprinks James to John Smith in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 6 June 1864.

Can anyone out there identify Mr James? Or was it a name that Eliza and her daughters adopted?

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