

The Case For Mordecai Solomon & Abraham Solomon Being the Same Person

(By John Shrimski) revised: January 2021

Introduction

Several years ago when I began investigating the Mordecai Solomon family, one of the first family trees I saw mentioned that it was thought that Mordecai came to Australia on the "Lady Castlereagh" in 1818. There was no source quoted for this information. Being an "amateur sleuth" I immediately looked up the convict list for the "Lady Castlereagh" but found no matching entry. Knowing that my grandfather, Mordecai Shrimski was more commonly called "Mark", I looked for Mark Solomon in the convict register and found an entry, but soon determined that it couldn't be him.

Having read that the earliest date for the arrival of free Jewish settlers in Australia [was thought to be 1821](#), I had assumed that our Mordecai had arrived as a convict. I then decided to look further in the "Lady Castlereagh" register but could find no list of non-convict crew or passengers. I admit that I have always been sceptical of Mordecai arriving free and to date have absolutely no evidence that he in fact did so.

I noticed several years ago whilst looking for evidence of Mordecai living in Dapto that he did not appear in either the 1828 or 1841 census. By 1840 it was thought that he had moved to Sydney, however there was an 1841 census return for an Abraham Solomon, living in Dapto. Recently I investigated this census return further and as far as could be determined, I discovered that he had an identical family mix to Mordecai (based on religion, gender and age range). I have noticed that at least 2 other people (one as far back as 1979) have also taken notice of this specific census return, but I may be the first to compare the family composition.

The aim of this short article is to trace Abraham Solomon(s) life, look at what we know about Mordecai, then see if we can overlap this information into one person's life without causing any factual conflicts.

Abraham Solomon(s)

I felt that two Solomon families, both living in Dapto at almost the same time, with the same family mix was somewhat co-incidental, especially as both families were Jewish. I decided my first task was to try to determine which Abraham Solomon was the one in the census return.

[The Census Form \(completed 13-3-1841, in Dapto, Dwelling owned by Gerard Gerard\)](#)

The information in the 1841 census form ([summary giving location](#) - although haven't been able to relate this to a geographical position, [Illawarra census page 1](#), [page 2](#)) indicated that

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Abraham was married, had 4 children, was a free man but had arrived in Australia as a convict. Details of my findings were :-

- 1 married man (aged 21 - 45), arrived as a convict but now free, Jewish, farmer ... except for the arriving as a convict, this could be **Mordecai**
- 1 married woman (aged 21 - 45), arrived free, Jewish, no occupation ... this could be **Elizabeth**
- 1 male child under 2yrs, born in Colony, Jewish ... this could be **Henry**
- 1 male child and 2 female children between 2 -7yr born in Colony, Jewish these could be **Myer, Sarah and Jane**
- 2 single men (aged 21 – 45), born in the Colony, 1 Roman Catholic, the other C of E, farmers These could be 2 helpers on the farm
- 1 single female (aged 21 – 45), arrived free, Roman Catholic, no occupation a helper

I then tried to locate all the Abraham Solomon(s) living in the Colony at the time period.

- [one arrived on the “Shipley” in 1818 as a convict](#)... and I’ll give some more details about him later
- the other [arrived on the “Lady Kennaway” in 1836](#) and not married until 1850’s Clearly wrong time frame
- I can find no Abraham Solomon (or variations of name) who either married or had an “application to marry” in the right time frame
- there were no children born in NSW to a father with the name Abraham Solomon (or variations of name), in the right time frame
- there are no “Family notices” in Trove that may be relevant to Abraham Solomon(s) having children during 1830's and 40's

Other points to note in my proposition are :-

- The Census form was completed on 13th March 1841 but we have always felt that the family moved to Sydney around 1839/40. This date of moving to Sydney has always been based around the date and location of Henry’s birth.
- [Henry's birth certificate](#) states that he was born on 18th Sept 1840 in Sydney, but the BDM registry themselves say that information at that time was somewhat unreliable. In those days people didn't register births per se. They maybe went to a church, synagogue etc. to name their child, then that information was collated by the church and sent on to the registry. So whilst it would have been nice for Henry to have been shown to be born in Dapto, the fact that he wasn't doesn't blow the case out of the water. It is interesting to note that 3 of Mordecai's 8 children didn't have their births registered at all. Since the original writing of this document I have come across a [published obituary](#) for Henry Solomon where it states that he was born in Dapto.
- Abraham is shown as arriving in Australia as a convict (or more precisely "other free person" i.e., not born in Colony and didn't arrive free, therefore he was an emancipist).

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- Abraham Solomon has signed the form. Given that many years later Mordecai was known to have put his "mark" on mortgage documents when he bought properties in Yurong Street, I have doubts that Mordecai could write, but it could have been signed by anyone, maybe Elizabeth.

Electoral Roll

- the [Electoral Roll for Macquarie Ward for 1849-50](#) shows Abraham Solomon (dwelling house Pitt Street)
- the [Electoral Roll for Macquarie Ward for 1851-52](#) shows Mordecai A. Solomon (dwelling house Pitt Street)
- In 1855 in the [Waugh and Coxes Directory of Sydney](#), Mordecai Abraham Solomon is noted as a General Dealer operating from at 241 Pitt Street

I can find no other Mordecai Solomon in Sydney in the right time-frame, so I find this information very strong supporting evidence that Abraham Solomon and Mordecai Abraham Solomon are one and the same.

There is another piece of evidence that is of interest. There is an on-line summary for each historic Jewish burial at Rookwood Cemetery which gives [translation/comments of each headstone](#). For Henry it states "Zwi son of Avraham" (Henry son of Abraham). The translation of the headstone actual says "Henry son of Mordecai" (even with my rudimentary Hebrew I can see this). So why the error. I have been told that it was a simple transcription error, but maybe not.

Bridge Street Synagogue records (1835 (hard to read) to 1843)

Both Mordecai Solomon and Abraham Solomon are on a [hand-written list of members](#) of the synagogue. But I would say that the Abraham Solomon on this list is the one who came in 1836 on the Lady Kennaway. He died in 1864 and had 6 children, but none before 1850. Also this Abraham Solomon is a dealer registered as living in Castlereagh St. (There are several Trove references to him)

Family Trees

I could find no family trees that claim Abraham Solomon (arrived 1818 on the "Shipley") as an ancestor. This is odd to say the least, especially if there were several children.

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Some history of Abraham Solomon

The following information relating to Abraham Solomon is freely available and I believe is not in dispute.

- appears on a [prison hulk register](#) as received on to hulk on 20th May 1818, aged 18yr, for stealing towels, convicted 13th April 1818 at Surrey Assize, found guilty and given 7 years. There is a [summary](#) of this entry available, showing the prison hulk was "Justitia" (how appropriate). A [summary of the trial](#) and a [mention in the "Morning Advertiser"](#) of 18-4-1818 in the UK can be seen. The conviction of 7 years can be more clearly seen in this [conviction register from Surry](#).
- [arrived in NSW on the "Shiple" in Nov 1818](#). Sentenced in Surrey for 7 years. Noted that he [received 35 lashes](#) for riotous and disorderly conduct during the voyage.
- 6th Nov 1823 his name appears on the last page of a [list of "Runaways"](#). ([This one](#) is more legible). Described as
 - coming from London via "Shiple"
 - 5ft 3", blue eye, flaxen hair, fair ruddy complexion
 - last seen - Emu Plains
- and in the same year (1823) he appears in a [population list](#), residence Liverpool, NSW
- 10-5-1825 gained [Certificate of Freedom](#) ... details below
 - no. 32/3655
 - arrived on "Shiple(2)" in 1818
 - convicted at Surrey Assize on 13-4-1818, term 7 years
 - occupation - Furrier, native place - London.
 - age 25yr, 5ft 3", sallow complexion, black hair, dark eyes (this is a completely different hair and eye colour from the entry above but just means that one of the entries is wrong)
 - remarks - sent to Port Macquarie on 7-11-1823 for the remainder of original sentence (as a runaway)

(gap from 1825 - 1834, but a lot better than a gap from 1818 to 1843 that we have for Mordecai)

- 1-4-1834 (Sydney Gazette) there is a [request to the Governor from Land Holders](#) and Free Settlers of Illawarra to provide support for land development. Abraham is a signatory and is on page 3.
- 1837 Abraham Solomon applied to buy 100 acres of land in the Dapto area but well away from where Mordecai lived. This application is documented and noted by Rabbi John Levi in his book, "These are the names". After an examination of the relevant documentation on microfilm at the Lands Office, I determined that in fact the sale did

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not go through i.e., the Colonial Secretary blocked the sale because he claimed that they hadn't determined how to break the land up. It's interesting to note that Abraham must have had access to about 500 pounds to contemplate this purchase. Abraham's return address on his purchase application is noted as "Osborne's Farm". It is interesting to note that Henry Osborne was the owner of the piece of land that Mordecai farmed. I have a 6 pages of microfilm copies available (page [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)) which, if you have the time and patience, can be deciphered.

- 1841 census - living in Dapto on farm owned by Gerard Gerard
- 1849-50 is in a voters' list, residing in Pitt St, Sydney

Gerard Gerard

Gerard Gerard was noted as the owner of the dwelling in Dapto that Abraham Solomon and family were living in 1841. A detailed look at the 1841 census shows that Gerard Gerard owned several dwellings in the Illawarra at that time at Dunlop Vale (later to become Kembla Grange) but only one in Dapto, which would have been the one that Abraham was living in 1841.

I have located the "memoria" ([1](#) and [2](#)) relating to Gerard's [purchase of Dunlop Vale](#), but no record of his purchase of any other land in Dapto in the right time frame. Location of such a document could confirm where this farm was located.

It was interesting to find that one of the other families [living at Dunlop Vale](#) in one of Gerard Gerard's dwellings (in 1841) was Elizabeth Solomon's brother, Isaac Hains.

He had married Rosetta Nathan on 2-4-1840 in Shoalhaven and was living not far from the Abraham Solomons' family. I have a copy of [Isaac and Rosetta's marriage certificate](#) hoping to find that Elizabeth and/or Mordecai were witnesses at their wedding. Unfortunately no witnesses were listed.

Ownership

To date I have found no documents that support that Abraham/Mordecai ever actually owned any land in the Dapto region. I recently met a descendant of Mordecai (via Henry's line) and the oral history in their family was that Mordecai was granted the right to clear the land in Dapto and could keep the proceeds of the sale of any of the timber on the land. It was felt that this was how he accumulated the funds to make a start in Sydney.

The relevance of this is that it appears he would not have been dependant on receiving an inheritance to make his way in the world.

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Conclusions

Whilst I am strongly suggesting that Mordecai Solomon and Abraham Solomons were the same person, this proposition has no bearing on whether or not he is the son of Myer Solomon or on anything about his family. It does however fill in a considerable number of gaps. It does not alter when he came to Australia but does suggest a different ship and that he came as a convict rather than a free man.

I have prepared a [Mordecai vs Abraham time line](#) and have included it below to give an overall view of the proposition.

My proposition is going to be much easier to "shoot down in flames" than prove. It would only take a single birth, marriage or death in Australia with Abraham Solomons named and in the right time period for my argument to be seriously challenged. I put the challenge out there for someone to prove me wrong.

Post-Script

I haven't really addressed the issue of why Abraham/Mordecai would have wanted to go through this name change saga. I suppose the answer is -

- as a convict you would have to stick with the name you used when you were convicted because until you obtained your "Certificate of Freedom" any official documentation where you dealt with the government would have to make reference to the ship you were transported on.
- Once you had your Certificate of Freedom" you could then invent a new person and the knowledge of a "dark past" could be hidden from family and others in your social and business circles. It was not unusual for people to change names.
- Most of Mordecai's offspring married reasonably well but it might have been a little more difficult if his convict origins had been known. Maybe Mordecai's children knew of his convict past but it certainly was not handed down as part of the family oral history.

For many decades, members of our family have expressed some doubts concerning Mordecai's origins. The oral history is that his father was the well-known Myer Solomon of Pall. There seems to be no questioning that his father's name was "Meir" (the Hebrew for Myer). After all it is on his grave.

Were there other Myer Solomons in London in the right time frame and might one of these well be Mordecai's father? It should be noted that Myer Solomon of Pall Mall's Hebrew name was Meir ben Solomon – from page 77 of the "Western Synagogue through Two Centuries" by Arthur Barnett.

The following is a discussion of our continuing search for the answer to this question, using DNA analysis and good old "hard slog" genealogy. This is just one lead that we are following.

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Is Rebecca Elizabeth Solomon the Missing Link?

A couple of months ago Adrian Paul found, through Ancestry DNA, a Mary Ellen Winn, whose Ancestry account is administered by her daughter, Kirsten Bishop. Mary Ellen has the match level of being a potential third cousin.

However, most importantly she is **not** in the same line as Mordecai/Abraham.

Of course there is nothing unusual about this level of match but we have found via Ancestry and Gedmatch that at least six others in our Solomon line also share a close genetic link (possibly around the 4th cousin level) with Mary Ellen.

A word of caution is required here. Once you get to more distant relationships the accuracy of 'one-to-one' DNA matching is less reliable and is really only an indication of what is possible. The matching of several members from the same family is much more reliable.

The details of these matches have been loaded into DNAPainter and analysis of a chromosome map have confirmed that there is some likelihood that Mary Ellen fits into our family somewhere.

However, when we looked at her ancestral tree, to our amazement Kirsten had traced her family line back through her second Great Grandmother, Rebecca Elizabeth Solomon (1802 – 1878) to a Myer Solomon from London.

What is particularly interesting is Mary Ellen's direct ancestral lineage (below it is shown from oldest to most recent):

Pinchas Zelig Solomon m Rose Asher
Myer Solomon m Sarah Cohen
Isaac Symons m Rebecca Elizabeth Solomon (1802 – 1878)
Jacob Moses m Sarah Symons
John Moss m Mary Carter
Rostyn A Winn m **Ruth Moss**
Mary Ellen m Colin Henry Bishop

On the surface it looks as though we may have struck gold i.e., generally many of our family have an approximate 4th cousin link to Mary Ellen and she has a Myer Solomon as a 2nd great grandfather. So DNA and genealogy match up rather nicely.

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So, to put in simple terms, considering the facts that several of us in different branches of our Mordecai/Abraham tree have genetic links to this tree; this Myer Solomon was living in London in the same time frame as 'ours' and Rebecca Elizabeth was born only two years after Mordecai/Abraham, it is tempting to say the Rebecca Elizabeth and Mordecai must be siblings and Myer is their father. It all fits.

However, when we took a rather more critical look at this tree we found certain issues:

1. Mary Ellen has found no verifiable link between her grandfather, John Moss and her great-grandfather, Jacob Moses (m Sarah Symons). Although Jacob and Sarah did have a son called Isaac Moses, (aka John Moss), whose death certificate verifies that Jacob and Sarah were his parents, it is definitely a different John Moss to the one in Mary Ellen's lineage. So whilst this doesn't mean that this link in the tree is invalid, it just means we consider it unlikely.
2. Mary Ellen's tree from John Moss down is very well researched. However, from Jacob Moses and Sarah Symons up to Pinchas Solomon it is based on other people's published trees and generally whilst much of it is verifiable, some of it isn't.
3. I also believe there is an issue with Myer (son of Pinchas) being Rebecca Elizabeth's father. Pinchas Zelig Solomon and Rose Asher had several children one of whom was Myer. It is very tempting to assume that this Myer is Mordecai's father because it would correlate nicely with Mordecai having named his first 2 children Sarah and Myer (in the tradition of Ashkenazi Jews of naming children after departed relatives that they wished to honour). Whether his parents had died by then we don't know.

But here's the problem. If you go to the synagoguescribes.com web site and do a search for Jewish marriages in London where the father's Hebrew name is "Zelig" you are presented with a list, some of whom are for the marriage of Pinchas and Rose's children.

One of these is the entry for Myer Solomon m Sarah Cohen in 1797. So far so good. If you skip forward a generation and look for the marriage of Myer's (supposed daughter) Rebecca Elizabeth to Isaac Symons, you can find the entry in Synagoguescribes in 1836, and it shows her father's Hebrew name as

Father's Hebrew Name	Meir b. (adj. Abraham
Mother's Family Name	

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i.e., Her father is not Meir or Meir ben Zelig, but Meir son of Abraham. It may well be that the entry has been adjusted to reflect that this is not Meir ben Zelig. **I think this is a critical piece of evidence** and may mean that we now have 3 Myers i.e.,

- Meir ben Zalman (Solomon)
- Meir ben Zelig (Pinchas)
- Meir ben Avraham (Abraham)

If Mordecai's father was Myer son of Abraham (Meir ben Avraham) then our other discussions regarding Mordecai and Abraham being the same person have a nice feel to them. Mordecai was born circa 1800, Myer's father, Abraham, may have died by then and what would have been more natural that to name your son Abraham (later to become Mordecai), to honour your dear departed father?

Other Possibilities

Whilst one can find holes in Mary Ellen's family tree it is undeniable that a strong DNA connection exists to her. We then set about trying to locate other descendants of Rebecca Elizabeth against whom we could test our DNA.

One person we found on Gedmatch was Gary Luke who descends from Rebecca Elizabeth's 3rd daughter, Rachael Symons. Gary has been known to us for some time and is a keen genealogist and his tree is totally verifiable from Rebecca Elizabeth down to himself. Our DNA tests against him also revealed potential 4th cousin links with us.

The other thing of interest that Gary has in his family tree the identity of Rebecca Elizabeth's father –

Name	Rebecca Elizabeth SOLOMONS	
Born	Abt 1802	London, ENGLAND ^P
Gender	Female	
Immigration	Abt 1850	Sydney, NSW ^P
Hebrew Name	Rivka bat Meir ben Avraham	
Source note	Death: 1184*	
Source note	Sources: Gt.Synagogue mfilm.	
Source note	Sources: smh: 10 June 1878	
Died	8 Jun 1878	Sydney, NSW ^P
Person ID	I31	MyGenealogy
Last Modified	25 Apr 2017	

He shows Rebecca's Hebrew name as Rivka bat Meir ben Avraham, which translates to Rebecca, daughter of Myer the son of Abraham. His source is shown as The Great Synagogue microfilm. Gary has informed me that his source for "son of Abraham" is from Synagoguescribes which comes from the original marriage register. So now we have 2 descendants from Rebecca Elizabeth which makes our connection to her even more likely.

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We should note at this time that Adrian (and other descendants in both the Myers and Solomon lines) has a known blood connection to Rebecca Elizabeth via her father, Isaac Symon's line. This could account for his somewhat closer DNA link to Mary Ellen Bishop and Gary Luke.

As far as Gary's link with Mordecai is concerned, he has not found any record that connects any of his ancestral family with Mordecai Solomon's family although they were in the colony across the same decades and died within five years of each other.

Evidence of the Death of the Relevant Myer Solomons

In Mary Ellen's tree the death date for Myer Solomon (son of Pinchas) is given as 1862. When I checked this on UK BDM I found that it related to a 3 year old child. I then thought I should look for the death of a Myer (son of Abraham).

I had been trying to work out when the 2 different Myer Solomons died and was running out of candidates, so I decided to search on Synagoguescribes for Solomons with Hebrew name = Meir. This brought up a few Michael Solomons and one which took my interest is below.

His Hebrew name is Meir and his father's name is Abraham Shemaiah (Shemaiah is an honorific meaning "prophet"). Hopefully this is an avenue of research we can take further.