

Solomon, Joseph (1780–1851)

by H. J. Solomon

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Joseph Solomon (1780?-1851), merchant, son of Abraham Solomon, was in partnership with his brother Judah (1777?-1856) as Jewish shopkeepers at Sheerness, England, when in August 1819 at the Kent Assizes they were convicted of hiring burglars to repossess unpaid goods. They arrived at Sydney in the *Prince Regent* next January and were sent in the *Castle Forbes* to Hobart Town, where they landed in March. By January 1821, trading as J. & J. Solomon, they had a general store at the corner of Liverpool and Argyle Streets. In June they were acquitted on a charge of selling spirits without a licence, though similar charges later cost them £50 in fines. In 1823 both brothers were foundation subscribers to the Bank of Van Diemen's Land. By 1825 they had a new store in Argyle Street and had begun dealing in town and country land; Joseph had moved to Launceston, where he opened the Tasmanian Store in Cameron Street. He received his conditional pardon seven years later and his free pardon in 1836. By that time the brothers had opened a second business in Launceston, and a branch at Evandale which was soon raided by bushrangers, but the two brothers were drifting apart. Another store was opened at Campbell Town in 1838 and next year Joseph announced his withdrawal from the partnership, though it was not formally dissolved for three years.

Both brothers had left wives and families in England but, unlike Judah, Joseph had abandoned the Jewish faith and was joined by his lawful children, though his wife had died. At St John's Church, Launceston, in July 1833 his son Lion Henry married Frances, daughter of Edward and Ann Symonds from Wolverton, Dorset, and on 17 November Joseph Solomon married Eliza Backas (Backhouse), the widowed daughter of Sharpland Graves of County Wicklow, Ireland. His three daughters also married: Mary to William Roberts in 1835, Sarah to Benjamin Walford in 1838 and Frances to Anthony Cottrell, who had been chief constable at Launceston and as a member of **John Batman's** syndicate looked after Solomon's speculations at Port Phillip. Solomon soon withdrew from his investments in Melbourne and with help from Lion was content to consolidate his business interests in Launceston, surrounded by his family. As his health declined he spent more time on his property near Evandale, where he had built his country home, Riverview. There he died on 14 May 1851, aged 71, and was buried in the Anglican churchyard at Evandale. He was survived by his wife, four children and thirteen grandchildren. He had left his estate in order, even making an annuity of £25 to an aged aunt in England, 'this being the amount I have hitherto been in the habit of remitting to her'.

Solomon had no son named Joseph. In M. Gordon, *Jews in Van Diemen's Land* (Sydney, 1965), Joseph Solomon has been credited with a son of that name. This is a wrong identification. The Joseph who went to Port Phillip in 1839 and lived for a time at Saltwater River may have been the son of Judah who contested the Huon electorate in Tasmania in 1880.

Select Bibliography

- *Historical Records of Australia*, series 3, vol 4
- J. Fenton, *A History of Tasmania* (Hob, 1884)
- correspondence file under Joseph Solomon (Archives Office of Tasmania)
- H. J. Solomon, *The Queer Colony* (privately held).

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Life Summary [\[details\]](#)

Birth

1780

Death

14 May 1851
Evandale, Tasmania, Australia

Cultural Heritage

- English

Religious Influence

- Anglican
- Jewish

Occupation

- convict
- emancipist
- general merchant
- landowner