

Ellen PRATT nee DONOVAN (per Martin Luther 1852) alias 'Campbell Town Nell'

It is the truth of war that the history is written by the survivors. Convict histories are largely the same, written by their descendants. Those that managed to obtain their freedom marry and enjoy, if only in a small way, the security of work and family. Over time, with the status of wife and mother, they obtained a respectable place in society. For many others who never married or obtained a settled life, their history is told only from their struggles with the law.

This story is of Ellen, who partially succeeded. She did indeed marry and had a family of six children. For reasons unknown (although a liking of alcohol may have been the reason) Ellen was not able to grasp the opportunity marriage had given her.

Ellen Donovan was born in County Cork, Ireland, about 1835. Her mother's name was Honora, and she had two brothers, Patrick and John. I have studied the birth records for Ellen, John, and Patrick with mother Honora and found three possibilities for her father - Timothy, John or Patrick.

Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier 29 July 1851

"ELLEN DONOVAN was found GUILTY of stealing a piece of calico the property of William Fitzgibbon and Co. It appears that the prisoner a girl; of about sixteen, had taken into the Queen's Old Castle a girl of only ten years of age, and introduced her to steal the property which the prisoner appropriated to herself.

The Court, in sentencing the prisoner, said ELLEN DONOVAN, if your history had merely shown you to be depraved in your person, I should have given you another chance of remaining in the country. But I can't do that, when I recollect that you have led other person, still younger than yourself, into the same course of life as your own. Therefore, to protect other innocent persons, I must remove you. Your sentence is, that you be transported for seven years.

The unfortunate young girl was then removed back into the dock, apparently overwhelmed by the weight of her sentence, her cries and screaming being truly heart rending."

Ellen had had six previous convictions for theft and probably expected to be gaoled locally.

After her trial, Ellen was held in the Cork County Gaol until being sent to Dublin where she arrived at Grangegorman Prison on 26 January 1852. She was held here until 31 May 1852 when she was taken aboard the *Martin Luther*, bound for Hobart, Van Diemen's Land. The *Martin Luther* departed from Dublin on 8 June 1852, and arrived on the 01 September 1852 in Hobart Van Diemen's Land. Ellen Donovan spent six days on the sick list on the ship coming out, from 22-27 June 1852 – she had diarrhoea.

The records of Ellen's Convict Indent, and the Tasmania Police Gazette described her as 16 years old, approx. 5 foot 2 inches tall, dark brown hair, high forehead, oval face, fair complexion, blue eyes, medium nose, mouth and chin. She was a child's maid, from Cork, Ireland, and arrived on the ship *Martin Luther*.

Ellen's early years in van Diemen's Land were marred by her being consistently in trouble with the law - absent without leave, refusing to work, 6 months hard labour; being in possession of tobacco, 7 days gaol; and smoking, 2 months hard labour. Ellen had many employers, never staying with one employer for longer than 4.5 months.

On her Application for Approval to Marry, it stated that she had to be six months without a conviction before she could marry. This didn't happen. Her approval for marriage was dated 12 Dec 1854 and she was married on 2 January 1855.

On 02 January 1855 Ellen Donovan married John Pratt at Ross, Van Diemen's Land. John was born in Leicestershire in 1823, and was an ex-convict. His mother was Elizabeth and he had a brother James and a sister Elizabeth. He had been transported for seven years for selling a watch knowing it was stolen. He arrived in Van Diemen's Land on 20 August 1843 aboard the *Gilmore* on its 3rd voyage with convicts. John was consigned to work in the Westbury area of northern Tasmania during his sentence. He received his Ticket of Leave on 21 December 1847, after having had his first one revoked on 27 April 1847. He was granted his Certificate of Freedom on 03 August 1849.

Ellen and John lived in the Midlands district of Tasmania where they raised their family of six children; Elizabeth born 27 January 1856 at Oatlands, John 1 January 1858 at Oatlands, Ellen 16 November 1860 at Campbelltown, Sarah 28 April 1862 at Campbelltown, Alice 7 October 1864 at Campbelltown, and Thomas James 31 December 1866 at Oatlands.

Ellen received her Ticket of Leave on 8 June 1858. This was also noted in the Cornwall Chronicle, Launceston (1835-1880) Saturday 23 June 1855

The family were living in the Campbell Town District, when daughter Sarah made a sampler on which she stitched: Campbell Town. Riccarton

Sarah Pratt.1.9.1875

During 1878 John Pratt and their six children emigrated to New Zealand, without Ellen. Ellen stayed in the Campbell Town area where she spent most of her life. When she separated from the family and where she lived and how she lived is unknown.

Various newspaper reports Ellen as Ellen Waters, alias Harrison, alias Pratt, alias Donovan, alias 'Campbell Town Nell'.

The Hobart Mercury (Tas: 1854-1857) Wednesday 20 August 1856

Disturbers of the Peace – Margaret Casper and Ellen Pratt, of the one gender, and Thomas Richardson, Daniel Reed, and E. Ashley, of the other gender, were required to pay 5s each to the Treasury, which they graciously consented to do.

The Hobart Mercury (Tas: 1854-1857) Wednesday 15 October 1856

Disturbing the Peace – Four females named Elizabeth Phillips, Ellen Pratt, Emma West, and Mary Cormack were charged with disturbing the peace in Liverpool Street about 1 o'clock on Tuesday morning. They pleaded guilty to save time, and were each fined 5s.

The Mercury (Hobart, Tas) Tuesday 8 January 1861

POLICE OFFICE – Monday 7 January 1861

Stealing Money – Ellen Pratt was charged with stealing £12 on the 6th inst., from the person of one William White. Discharged on Tuesday 8 January 1861

Police Records – 7 May 1866 aged 35 years (sic), at Oatlands, Stealing, 3 months in Hobart, discharged 1 August 1866

Police Records – 4 March 1867 aged 35 years (sic), at Green Ponds, Idle and Disorderly, 3 months at Hobart, discharged 29 May 1867

Police Records – 19 July 1869 aged 35 years (sic), at Oatlands, Stealing, 6 months at Hobart, discharged 12 January 1870

The Tasmanian Times (Hobart Town, Tas 1867-1870) Thursday 6 January 1870 Page 2 POLICE COURT Wednesday, 5th January 1870 (Before the Stipendiary Magistrate) STREET DRUNKARDS Ellen Pratt, John Doyle, and John Thomas, were charged, the two former with being drunk and disorderly, and

the latter drunk and incapable in streets and public places, were fined 5s each, with the usual in default.

Police Records – 5 January 1871 aged 40 years, at Oatlands, Resisting Police, 7 days at Oatlands, discharged 14 January 1871

Police Records – 9 September 1871, aged 40 years, at Oatlands, Larceny, 12 months, served at Hobart, discharged 18 August 1872

The Tasmanian Tribune (Hobart Town 1872-1876) Monday 16 September 1872 Page 2 POLICE COURT

Before Hon.A. Kennerley, Esq., Mayor. John Kerr and Ellen Pratt, for disturbing the peace on the 14th inst. were fined 10s with the alternative of seven days to the House of Correction.

Launceston Examiner (Tas 1842-1899) Thursday 14 June 1877 Page 3 CAMPBELL TOWN POLICE COURT. ...*Idle and Disorderly* – Ellen Pratt, having been in custody since Friday last on the above charge, was released from custody, the police not pressing the charge.

All these occurred while her husband and children were still in the Campbell Town area. Things were no better after they left for New Zealand.

Police Records – 21 July 1879 aged 40 years (sic), at Campbell Town, Larceny, 3 months, discharged 22 October 1879

The Mercury (Hobart, Tasmania) Thursday 24 July 1879 wrote:

CAMPBELL TOWN (From our own correspondent)

...The redoubtable Mrs. Pratt, the terror of the police, and the Midland Kellys (so says the 'Medium') took a ride in the police trap to-day, as far as the railway station, *en route* for Launceston, where she spends the greater part of the year in durance vile, to the great relief of Campbell Town in general, and the police in particular, who have found from experience that the best way is to let her play up well, till she does something to secure a sentence of such a length that she has to go to town to do it. The police trap is a rather unique arrangement, something after the hearse style (in fact, it has brought a body in for inquest), something like a long box on two wheels, with lids slanting like the roof of a house, just holds one body comfortably, and with a couple of policemen in the pole, instead of Jerusalem ponies, trots awkward characters off in very easy style. And as Mrs Pratt has a great objection going with, or even being seen in the company of policemen in general, the trap was brought into requisition and – well, once in that, you must go.

Launceston Examiner (Tas 1842-1899) Monday 20 October 1879 Page 3 POLICE COURT

Saturday, October 18. Before the Hon, Chas Meredith, Acting R.M. Drunkards – Jessie Robins and William Marsden were fined 10s and 5s respectively for being drunk and incapable on Friday. Ellen Pratt, similarly charged, was admonished and discharged.

Police Records - 4 November 1879 aged 55 years (sic), at Campbell Town, Idle and Disorderly, 6 months at Launceston, discharged 28 Apr 1880

Police Records – 29 June 1880 aged 44 years (sic), at Campbell Town, Annoying passers-by, 6 months at Launceston, discharged 29 December 1880

Launceston Examiner (Tas 1842-1899) Friday 24 December 1880 Page 2 MINING MEETINGS

Longford. Police Court – The Police Magistrate occupied the Bench at this Court yesterday morning, a drunkard, Ellen Pratt was mulcted in the sum of 5s, or 24 hours solitary confinement.

Launceston Examiner (Tas 1842-1899) Friday 7 May 1886 Page 3 LAUNCESTON POLICE COURT
Thursday May 6. Before Mr K. Whitfold, J.P. INEBRIATES – Arthur Gorman and Ellen Pratt were fined 5s or 24 hours' imprisonment for having been drunk.

The North West Post (Formby, Tas 1887-1916) Saturday 7 March 1891 Page 2 LOCAL AND GENERAL
At the Forth police court, on Wednesday, before W. C. Alcock, J.P., a well-known character named Ellen Waters, alias Ellen Pratt, alias Campbell Town Nell, was brought up on a charge of being drunk and disorderly, and was fined 5s, with the alternative being three days imprisonment. A second charge of obscene language was preferred against the accused. She pleaded guilty, and was fined 10s, in default seven days imprisonment.

The North West Post (Formby Tas 1887-1916) Saturday 12 September 1891 Page 2 LOCAL AND GENERAL

At the Ulverstone Police Court on Thursday, before H.L.Crowther, Esq., S.M., and P Callaghan, Esq., J.P., John Harrison pleaded guilty to using obscene language and was fined 5s, with the alternative of twenty-four hours' imprisonment. An old offender named Ellen Harrison, alias Nell Pratt, alias Campbell Town Nell, pleaded guilty to being drunk and disorderly, and was fined 10s, with the alternative of forty-eight hours' imprisonment.

Police Office Zeehan - 27 March 1895 Offensive Language; 3 months

Zeehan and Dundas Herald (Tas 1890-1922) Thursday 28 March 1895 Page 3 POLICE COURT
Before E.H Fowell, S.M., and A. Morrisby, J.P.... Ellen Pratt *alias* Donovan, *alias* Harrison, *alias* "Campbell Town Nell" was charged with using obscene language, and was fined 41s, in default three months' imprisonment.

Note, for Ellen to get to Zeehan, she would have travelled by ship to Strahan, then train to Zeehan. There was no railway from Zeehan to Burnie before 1897, when they started the northern line, and it was opened in 1900.

Police Records – 4 March 1896 aged 59 years, at Deloraine, Larceny, 1 month at Launceston, discharged 7 April 1896

Daily Telegraph (Launceston Tas 1883-1928) Thursday 5 March 1896 Page 4 DELORAINE

At the Police Court on Wednesday, before Messrs John Hart and James Lovejoy (Miss M Fitzgerald acting bench clerk). Ellen Harris *alias* Pratt was charged with stealing a piece of calico from the shop of Mr R.P. Furmage, Deloraine. For the prosecution, the evidence of Mr R.P. Furmage and Miss Norah King shop assistant who saw the defendant take the calico off the counter and put it out of sight, and Sub-Inspector Marshall who arrester her, was heard. The prisoner admitted having a previous offence. The Bench sentenced her to one month's imprisonment. The defendant went off declaiming against the superintendent of police bringing old things against her.

Launceston Examiner (Tas 1842-1899) Saturday 7 March 1896 Page 5 COUNTRY NEWS DELORAINE
March 5

At the police office on Wednesday, before Messrs John Hart and James Lovejoy, J's. P., Ellen Harrison, alias Pratt, pleaded not guilty to stealing a piece of calico from the Don Store the previous day. Superintendent Cameron prosecuted. The evidence of R.P.Furmage, Norah King, and Sub-Inspector Marshall was taken, and the accused was found guilty and sentenced to one month's imprisonment.

Launceston Examiner (Tas 1842-1899) Friday 16 October 1896 Page 5 CURRENT TOPICS

Longford Police Court...On Thursday the Warden and Mr R Gould, J.P., resided to deal with the offenders run in on show day....James Nelson, Henry Nelson, and Ellen Harrison, or Pratt, pleaded guilty to using obscene language and were each fined 10s or 24hours. The two Nelsons paid.

Police Office Hobart – 8 June 1904 – Drunk etc. – 7 days

Police Office Hobart – 25 July 1904 – Drunk etc. – 48 hours

The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times on Friday 7 October 1904, wrote the following: "DEVONPORT On Wednesday night a woman named Ellen Pratt or Harrison arrived from Deloraine by the evening train. She was under the influence of liquor, and huddled on the platform for a while. Later in the evening she was found sleeping under the verandah of the Grand Hotel by Constable Cooper, who conveyed her to the West Devonport lockup. She was charged with vagrancy at the Police court yesterday morning, before Mr A.J. Stokes, J.P., and sentenced to a week's imprisonment.'

Police Office Launceston – 12 January 1905 – Drunk etc. – 24 hours

In the *Examiner, Launceston Tasmania* on Friday 13 January 1905

POLICE COURT – Yesterday morning, at this court, Ellen Pratt, an old woman, was fined 5s, with the option of 24 hours, for having been drunk and incapable in Cameron Street the previous day.

In 'A History of Oatlands & Jericho' by K.R.von Steiglitz, OBE, published 19 March, 1960 on page 73 under Memories of Inglewood – Alfred Burbury, it was written..."In Oatlands in my younger days there were 7 hotels and 2 breweries, 7 general stores, 3 or 4 blacksmiths' shops, and 2 carpenters. Every pub had its skittle alley then, and a sound of revelry was commonly heard coming from them; the strident voices of the old hands blending with the shrill tones of the village viragos – some of whom made matters a bit too hot in the taproom. The only way they could be got to the lock up was in a wheelbarrow, one policeman wheeling and the other with a hammerlock on the singing shouting lady. Old Nell Pratt was known to everyone."

Ellen was admitted to the Launceston Benevolent Asylum on 3 April 1909. She was discharged to work on 23 April 1909. (NS1172-1-1 Page 140)

Ellen Harrison was re-admitted to the Launceston Invalid Depot on 01 May 1909 (see NS1172-1-1 Page 141) and died there on 08 August 1909. (see NS1172-1-1 Page 144) Her details on admission were

Names:	Harrison, Ellen
No:	296
Age:	64y
Civil Condition:	F.S. (ie Female Servant)
Religion:	Roman
Ship:	Martin Luther
Birthplace:	Ireland

NB: There was no Ellen Harrison aboard the Martin Luther; Ellen Donovan arrived on the Martin Luther; and married John Pratt at Ross. Ellen's age was closer to 74y than 64y – using her age on her Convict Indent

Her details on her death were:

Names:	Harrison, Ellen
Ship:	Martin Luther
From What District Admitted:	Lton (Launceston)
Date of Admission:	1/5/1909
Date of Discharge:	8/8/1909
Remarks:	Died

Launceston Benevolent Asylum (NG1172) Register of Admissions and Discharges 01 Jan 1898 to 30 Apr 1915 Item Number: NG1172/1/1 Location: Hobart A 63 4 Copy Number: Z3099

Ellen Harrison was buried in Carr Villa Memorial Park, Launceston
Date of Burial: 09 Aug 1909
Age: 65y
Area: Monumental
Location: Section A
Number: 598

The *Martin Luther* was the second last female convict ship from Ireland and the third last female convict ship to Australia.

In her book 'Abandoned Women' Lucy Frost writes on paged 198

"Some women seem to have given up on themselves before they even sailed, yielding to transportation as if to fate and living out their lives in an alcoholic stupor'...She continued her directionless life, showing up again and again the police courts for being drunk and disorderly... If she had remained in Scotland, had never been transported, it's hard to say how her life would have been much different" ..

Although the above quote relates to another convict, who had arrived from Scotland, it sums up Ellen very well. If she had remained in Ireland, it is probable she would have followed the same course.

Ellen Pratt nee Donovan alias 'Campbell Town Nell' is immortalised in Campbell Town in the brick Convict Trail. Her brick is next to that of her husband, John Pratt. They are numbers AO75 and AO76 and are opposite Valentine Park

Resources:

The National Archives of Ireland: Transportation Records

Tasmania Archives: Convict Indents
 Births Deaths and Marriages Printouts
 Colonial Tasmanian Family Links
 Launceston Benevolent Asylum Records
 Tasmanian Police Gazettes
 Tasmanian Pioneer Indexes 1803-1899

Female Convict Resource Centre: Prison Records Ireland and Tasmania
 Police Records, Tasmania
 List of Employers and employment dates

Lucy Frost 'Abandoned Women' published in 2015 by Allen & Unwin ISBN 978 176029 0 269

Trove: Australian Online Newspapers
 The Hobart Mercury
 The Mercury, Hobart
 The Courier, Hobart
 Launceston Examiner
 The Cornwall Chronicle, Launceston
 Zeehan and Dundas Herald
 The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times, Devonport
 The Tasmanian Tribune
 The North West Post
 Daily Telegraph
 The Tasmanian Times

Carr Villa Cemetery: Online Database

K.R.von Steiglitz, O.B.E. 'A History of Oatlands & Jericho' published in 1960 by Telegraph
Printery Pty Ltd Launceston

Irish Newspaper Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier 29 July 1851

google.com
ancestry.com

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NB Details of Ellen's family

John PRATT (husband) born c1823 Leicester Leicestershire England, died 11 May 1900 Matura
Southland New Zealand

Children:

Elizabeth (Lizzie) married 11 Aug 1879 at Matura Bridge Southland New Zealand to John Thomas
BLAMPIED

John (son) married 28 Feb 1888 at Matura Southland New Zealand to Helen McDONALD

Ellen (Nellie) married 18 Feb 1885 Dunedin Otago New Zealand to James JAMIESON

Sarah died 23 Aug 1884 in Matura Southland New Zealand

Alice married 13 Sep 1893 in Hobart Tasmania Australia to Robert Charles CLARK

Thomas James died 26 Nov 1945 in Bedourie Far Western Queensland Australia