



Army Museum of Tasmania

Anglesea Barracks
HOBART

Information Sheet No 15

Who was Victoria May Floyd?

Victoria was born in on January 26th 1886, the fifth of eight children. Her family lived in Burnie, where even though her father John Floyd worked at the docks they received charitable support from ladies of the district. When Victoria was 9 years old the following was reported in the Launceston Examiner:

In March 1895, 9 year old Victoria was caught stealing from shops in Burnie and this practice had apparently been going on for some time. On Saturday 2 March she took half a crown from a shop till but was seen doing so. Taken before the local bench she was remanded until Monday but then released as the charge was dropped by the shop owner. The Burnie correspondent optimistically wrote "It is to be hoped the temporary imprisonment will prove beneficial to the young culprit, and that in future the system of petty pilfering will be conspicuous by its absence"

A few months after this incident, her father John was loading potatoes onto the steamship *Pukaki*, when a sling weighing half a ton swung and crushed him against the hatchway. He was not expected to live and lingered in a critical condition for 5 days, but had begun to make an almost miraculous recovery. . In September, he joined a few friends for a day's wallaby hunting. John climbed up on a log to wait for a shot and was leaning on his old gun. The firearm discharged into his stomach and killed him almost instantly. Residents of Burnie were greatly shocked and The *Wellington Times* noted that the family were now destitute and townspeople had begun a relief fund, and a benefit concert was to be held at Wynyard.

Widow Ann Floyd struggled on for a few years. In Feb 1897, a new child came into the family, Hannah Adelaide. Ann was registered as the mother, but the girl's parentage is bit of a mystery.

On 28 March 1898, 12 year old Victoria was convicted at Burnie of stealing a pair of shoes worth 8/6 from the shop of E.R.Evans. Three week's incarceration at Launceston Gaol was to be followed by 5 years at the Training School in Hobart. A "slight fair girl", she was classified as a neglected child and it was recorded that she was "unruly", had not been to school for years and had never been permanently employed. Her mother Ann was described as "poor" and of "not very good" character but nevertheless "sober". On 21 April 1898 Victoria was

admitted to the Reformatory. In 1903, when her sentence was to end, Victoria's sister Louisa wrote to the authorities asking that Victoria be sent back to Devonport to be with her family, offering to pay the fare themselves if they had to. The request was passed on to the Reformatory but upon release Victoria apparently stayed in Hobart and entered domestic service.

Within a year or so she married Alfred Warren a licensed hawker and also volunteer gunner in the Tasmanian Defence Force. With no family in Hobart, Victoria took a chance and falsely claimed she was 21 and therefore able to consent to the marriage. They seem to have separated before too long. By 1909, Victoria (sometimes called May) was living with John Thomas Patterson in Barrack St, Hobart and was using his surname. They had 4 children but did not marry until 1917. In 1925 Victoria left John Patterson for Clyde Johnson, 14 years her junior, and they departed Tasmania for Melbourne. Victoria and Clyde did not marry until 1940 when their only child was 14 years old. From 1945 Victoria lodged by herself in rooms at 110 Napier St and 15 Hanover St, Fitzroy, and it is from the latter that she was taken to St Vincent's in March 1961 with a fatal cerebral haemorrhage. (Acknowledgement: Floyd Family research by Greg Harling and Bruce Eames, Melbourne).