

Royal Western Australian Historical Society's
Annual Pioneers Memorial Service
on Sunday 7th June 1992 at St Bartholomews Chapel, East Perth Cemeteries,

Commemorating Louisa Jones and Sophia Hester

Louisa Jones died on 23rd December 1830 giving birth to the first European children conceived in Western Australia.

The infant son, Joseph, was to live only a few months, but Louisa left five other children to her husband Richard. Fortunately, Richard had confidence in himself and could turn his hand to everything from goldsmithing and printing the intricate wording for the windows of the Anglican Cathedral in Perth to being an active member of the first Perth Town Trust before venturing out to a pioneering life. The original family home on the Blackwood River was named Southampton House and still stands today.

Richard never remarried and his two sons remained bachelors. Of the daughters, young Louisa married Adam Armstrong, whose family established Dalkeith Farm in the area of the present suburb of that name. Three grand-daughters married into the pioneering Dempster family of Buckland House. Descendants of Louisa Jones, such as the Pattons of Waddi Forest, the Armstrongs of Bridgetown, the Yorks and Scotts of Watheroo, have pioneered farming properties throughout the state, besides being active in the timber and mining industries.

It is unfortunate that the tombstone of Louisa Jones is no longer standing. Records show that it remained in the cemetery until about the mid 1950s and was the oldest surviving tombstone. When it disappeared descendants had a new one built incorporating both Louisa and Richard on the same headstone which now stands in a family plot.

Sophia Hester of Canning, Western Australia was born in London on December 2, 1795, the daughter of John and Sarah Everett, and died just after her 35th birthday. Nothing is known directly of her until she married Thomas Hester in 1817 when she was twenty-two. Thomas had entered the British Army in the 60th Rifles as a Lieutenant, but was forced to resign his active duty in 1816 after having killed a brother officer in a duel. It was a legend, at least in the family, that the duel was fought about Sophia. In any event, the two were married shortly after these happenings and because dueling was by then outlawed in England, Thomas was exiled and had to remain abroad. For the next twelve years the couple lived in Calais, where their five children are recorded as having been born.

On June 1st, 1829 the Hester family set sail for the Swan River in the Lotus, which Joshua and James Gregory had chartered. The ship was 350 tons registered with Lloyds and carrying about 100 passengers, including children. It may be deduced that the experience of living in Calais, so close and yet so far from home, and the thought of unending exile in a foreign country, together with the prospect of over 6,000 acres of land, must have prompted Thomas and Sophia to risk the long and dangerous sea voyage to an unknown country.

On November 9, 1829, just over a month after arrival, Thomas took up 200 acres on the Canning River near where Langford is now and where a park has been named Hester. Later, with the addition of other land, the property was called Red Cliff Farm. Sophia had in her care at this time son Thomas aged eleven, Edward aged nine, Sarah seven, Robert five and Fredrick two years. In April 1830 she was pregnant again, but the harsh conditions were to prove too much for her. She lost her new-born son John and within a week she too had passed away.

The citation ended with a tribute to the first settlers' courage and perseverance and to the women like Sophia who agreed to come with their husbands to this unknown place and who died in the doing of it.