

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

BRITISH WOMEN'S EMIGRATION ASSOCIATION

Records, 1861-96

Reel M468

**Fawcett Library
27 Wilfred Street
London SW1**

**National Library of Australia
State Library of New South Wales**

Filmed: 1963

HISTORICAL NOTE

The formation of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society in London 1862 was largely due to the exertions of Maria Rye (1829-1903). The daughter of a solicitor, she was the manager of a law stationery business and was active in the Society for Promoting Employment of Women. She was convinced that there were many opportunities in the colonies for 'educated women of a respectable character' to find work as teachers or governesses. The aim of the Society was to help such women to emigrate by securing passages, purchasing cabin fittings and making loans, to be repaid within two years. Correspondents were appointed in major colonial posts who undertook to meet the emigrants and help them to obtain employment. They included Jane Barker and Fanny Perry, the wives of the Anglican bishops of Sydney and Melbourne.

Maria Rye and Jane Lewin were appointed the honorary secretaries of the Society. Rye left England in 1863 on a long visit to Australia and New Zealand and Lewin was the sole secretary until 1882. The Society sponsored 302 women between 1861 and 1885. By far the largest group went to Australia, followed by New Zealand and South Africa. Small numbers also went to Canada and the United States. Economic depression in the late 1860s and the expansion of public education in the Australian colonies in the 1870s meant that there were fewer opportunities for governesses and by the early 1880s the activities of the Society had virtually ended. Its final report in 1886 announced that its work had been transferred to the Colonial Emigration Society.

The writer and social reformer Louisa Hubbard (1836-1906) set up the Women's Emigration Society in 1880 and the United Englishwomen's Emigration Association in 1884. The later became the United British Women's Emigration Association in 1889. (The 'United' was dropped in 1901.) In 1919 the Association amalgamated with the Colonial Intelligence League and the South African Colonisation Society to form the Society for Overseas Settlement of British Women. It was dissolved in 1964.

Reference: Patricia Clarke. *The Governesses: letters from the colonies 1862-1882*, Melbourne, Hutchinson of Australia, 1985.

ARCHIVES OF THE BRITISH WOMEN'S EMIGRATION ASSOCIATION

The archives of the British Women's Emigration Association and related organisations were deposited in the Fawcett Library in 1964. Other records of the Association held in the Fawcett Library were microfilmed by the Australian Joint Copying Project on reel M2291.

In 1977 the Fawcett Society transferred its library to the City of London Polytechnic, which became the London Guildhall University in 1992. Its name was changed to the Women's Library in 2002. Since 2013 the Women's Library has been held in the British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics, 10 Portugal Street, London WC2A 2HD.

BRITISH WOMEN'S EMIGRATION ASSOCIATION

Reel M468

1. Letterbook of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-76

The volume contains copies of letters from governesses who had emigrated to the colonies, mainly Australia and New Zealand, with the assistance of the Society. They were addressed to the secretaries of the Society, Maria Rye, Jane Lewin, Martha Wyatt and Miss Sunter. Most of the correspondents wrote a letter soon after their arrival, while a small number sent several letters over a period of years.

Some of the letters were simply business letters concerning the repayment of loans or other financial matters. Others were much longer, describing their experiences since they left England, their impressions of their new homes and colonial society generally, and their hopes and disappointments. Among the subject matter of the letters were the voyage, conditions on the ships, relations with other emigrants, their first impressions on their arrival at their destination, relations with colonial clergy and other settlers, their employment as governesses and teachers, wages, the management of children, changes of employment, marriages, decisions to return to England, prospects for governesses in the colonies, wages of domestic workers, bush life, colonial society and the financial position of the colonies.

The Australian correspondents include Margaret Allen (Melbourne, Mount Gambier), Marie Atherton (Brisbane), C. Barlow (Melbourne), Mary Bayly (Sydney), Eliza Bernard (Sydney), Elizabeth Boake (Melbourne), Louisa Booty (Sandhurst, Victoria), Maria Borrow (Melbourne), Ann Davis (Sydney), Louise Dearmer (Sydney), Jane Finch (Sydney, Yass), Eliza Ford (Sydney), Louisa Geoghegan (Apsley, Victoria), Fanny Giles (Morpeth, NSW), Omérine Giraud (Melbourne), Gertrude Gooch (Sydney), Sarah Hamnett (Melbourne), Caroline Heawood (Melbourne, Ballarat), Annie Hunt (Melbourne, Wangaratta), Ellen Ireland (Newcastle, Goulburn), Edith Jadis (Melbourne, Deniliquin), Laura Jones (Melbourne, Waranga, Sandhurst), Jane Kidson (Melbourne), M. Kightley (Melbourne), Caroline Lash (Sydney), Isabella MacGillivray (Williamstown, Victoria), Agnes Macqueen (Brisbane), Cécille Nagelle (Melbourne, Gawler, Angaston), M.A. Oliver (Horsham, Victoria), Ellen Ollard (Melbourne), Rosa Phayne (Glenorchy, Melbourne), Lucy Phillips (Melbourne), Mary Phillips (Goulburn), Mary Richardson (Port Macquarie), Isabelle Rodgerson (Sydney), Annie Shaw (Melbourne), Clara Stone (Melbourne), Elizabeth Streeter (Jerry's Plains, Hunter Valley), Eliza Walpole (Ballarat), Sarah Webb (Sandhurst, Victoria) and H. Wilson (Brisbane)

The New Zealand correspondents include Lizzie Braddell (Manuherikia, Otago), Kate Brind (Nelson), Eliza Brook (Dunedin), Mary Brook (Dunedin), J.M. Cary (Dunedin, Wanganui), Marian Hett (Christchurch, Napier, Wellington), Augusta McNeill (Lyttelton), Georgina McNeill (Lyttelton), E.L. Manning (Dunedin), J. Merritt (Auckland), Lucy Scott (Christchurch), M.E. Smith (Wellington), Barbara Starkey (Napier), Fanny Thomas (Dunedin), Mary Wilson (Masterton) and Martha Wyatt (Greytown, Wairarapa).

2. Letterbook of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1877-82

The volume is similar to the first letterbook, although it covers a shorter period and there are a greater number of South African correspondents. The letters were addressed to Jane Lewin and Miss Sunter. The Australian and New Zealand correspondents include Florence Allen (Perth), Georgie Bird (Christchurch), Eleanor Blackith (Napier), J. Caldwell (Christchurch) Fanny Cross (Dunedin, Oamaru), M. Crowley (Illabo, NSW), Caroline Fox (Orari Gorge, Timaru), E.A. Hacon (Timaru), Caroline Haselton (Melbourne), Harriet Herbert (Waipukurau, Hawke's Bay), Pauline Jordan (Melbourne), Charlotte Kemp (Auckland), I. Keith (or Leith) (Canterbury, NZ), Elizabeth Long (Waimarama, Hawke's Bay), Cécille Nagelle (Angaston, SA), A. Russell (Dunedin), Ida White (Bowral, NSW) and S. Woerner (Dunedin).

3. Newspaper cuttingbook, c. 1886-96

The cuttings deal mainly with emigration, and particularly the emigration of women, as well as emigration societies, shipping, and social and economic conditions in the colonies. Several articles refer specifically to Australia. The newspapers represented include the *Daily Mail*, *Daily News*, *Guardian*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Queen*, *St James Gazette*, *The Standard* and *The Times*.

4. Minutebook of the Finance Committee of the United Englishwomen's Emigration Association, March 1885 – March 1886.

At the end of the book are two cheques signed by Maria Rye and Jane Lewin (1862), a proposal for the Association to use the Female Middle Class Emigration Fund for a period of five years, a letter from Jane Lewin to Louisa Hubbard on the same subject (3 Dec. 1891), and a letter of G.F. Plant (2 Aug. 1949) and a reply on the history of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society and the Colonial Intelligence League.

4. Minutebook of the Council of the United British Women's Emigration Association, May 1896 – December 1901

The book also contains minutes of committees of the Association.

5. Printed documents

Maria Rye. *Emigration of educated women*, London, Emily Faithfull & Co., n.d. (15pp) [A paper read at the Social Science Congress in Dublin in 1861.]

Jane Lewin. *Female middle class emigration*.)4pp) [A paper read at the Social Science Congress in Oct. 1863.]

First report of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1861-62. (15pp)

Report of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-72. (20pp)

Report of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-82. (14pp)

Report of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-85. (16pp)