

Elizabeth Hudspeth, an artist in Van Diemen's Land

The works of Elizabeth Hudspeth are largely unknown, like those of many early Australian women artists.

Robert Stevens remedies this, and illustrates some of her works which have been rarely or never published nor seen.

Her sketches of some early Tasmanian buildings, which have since been destroyed, may be the only record of them.



1.

C H T Costantini (1803–1860),

Elizabeth Hudspeth, 1834.

Watercolour on wove paper on card.

Private collection

ROBERT STEVENS

Elizabeth Hudspeth – a child travelling from England without her parents – fell and injured her knee aboard the *Medway* on its voyage to Australia. A “white swelling” developed and on her arrival in Hobart, her father, Dr John Maule Hudspeth, and Dr Robert Officer decided to amputate her leg.

The operation was performed without anaesthetic, a bullet placed in her mouth to prevent her gnashing her teeth. She recovered from this terrible ordeal, but had to wear a cork leg for the rest of her life.¹ The handicap didn't prevent her from travelling and sketching throughout Van Diemen's Land, visiting her close friend Mary Mowle in Twofold Bay NSW, and later returning to England. She was a courageous, talented and highly spirited young woman.

Elizabeth was born on 19 September 1820 at Bowsden, Northumberland, the eldest child of Dr John and Mary Hudspeth. On completion of his medical training, Dr Hudspeth became a surgeon on the whaler *Inverness* and visited Greenland, Davis Strait and Hudson Bay, before taking up private practice at Bowsden. Competition from the arrival of a number of doctors in the district and a prevailing depression made it difficult to earn a living, so the Hudspeths decided to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land. As Mary was pregnant with her second child, they decided to leave Elizabeth behind in the care of relatives. Alice Eleanora was born aboard the *Minerva* before it sailed from Leith on 30 April 1822, arriving in Hobart on 22 September.²

At the age of 11, Elizabeth was sent to join her family at their property *Bowsden*, Jericho, Van Diemen's Land.³ John had named his land grant after his former home town. She arrived in Hobart on 31 May 1832 aboard the *Medway*, which had twice previously brought convicts to Australia, but on this occasion only free settlers.⁴

She joined her father, mother, sisters (Alice Eleanora, Mary Jnr & Catherine Jane) and brother (John Coulter). Three of her brothers, (Thomas, William and Joseph) had died at Bowsden as infants. Her youngest sibling Francis (Frank), wasn't born until 1833. John's father Thomas, aunt Elizabeth Snr, and brothers Alexander and James also emigrated to Van Diemen's Land.

It is hard to comprehend the emotional impact of being reunited with her parents after nine years, meeting her three sisters and brother for the first time, and having to deal with the trauma of the amputation performed not long after she arrived.

The convict artist Charles Henry Theodore Costantini (c 1803– 1860) painted a miniature portrait of Elizabeth in 1834 when she was 13 or 14 years of age (**plate 1**). This is the only known image of her. Costantini captures a strength of character already evident at this young age. He also painted miniatures of other members of the family (**plate 2**). One could ask whether he influenced Elizabeth's great enthusiasm to sketch. Some of her sketches of properties show the house as a distant image in a sweeping landscape, similar to some of Costantini's naïve paintings of rural estates.

In December 1831 Costantini had been transferred to Port Arthur and employed as an assistant surgeon and hospital superintendent. During 1832 and 1833 he worked first under Acting Surgeon Henry Turner Harrington and later probably as an assistant to the Colonial Assistant Surgeon Dr Thomas Brownwell and his successor Dr John MacBraire. He was then assigned to Oatlands where he worked as Clerk to the Superintendent of the Spring Hill Road Party, Mr William Dawson.

On 14 March 1834, he received his freedom and was employed as a medical assistant to Dr John Maule Hudspeth.⁵ Costantini painted these early miniature portraits during this brief time with Dr Hudspeth (**plates**



ELIZABETH



ALICE



MARY JNR.



DR. JOHN MAULE



MARY SENIOR



JOHN COULTER



CATHERINE



FRANCIS

2.

C H T Costantini (1803-1860), [*The Hudspeth family*], 1834.
Individual watercolours on wove paper on card. Private collection



3.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858),
Hagley estate of Wm Lyttleton Esq.
V.D.Land, c 1837. Pen & ink, initials
EH and title inscribed on original
mount. Allport Library and Museum
of Fine Arts Collection, Tasmanian
Archive & Heritage Office, Hobart
AUTA001134821472

4.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858),
Ratho 1840. Pencil on laid tint paper,
inscribed "Ratho", initialled EH and
dated. Private collection

1–2). Dr Hudspeth became mentally ill
and was removed to the hospital at New
Norfolk, and died on 5 August 1837.
Costantini briefly took on his medical
responsibilities during this period.

Elizabeth, as the oldest child, was left
to take on much family responsibility.⁶
However she still found time to develop
her sketching skills, becoming a fine
artist and leaving a wonderful legacy
of delicate historical sketches and
lithographs. Her images are a treasure
trove of the history of Van Diemen's
Land, every sketch capturing a fragment

of the time. Several works are the only
records of their subjects.

She sketched at the time when many
settlers were quickly developing their
land grants using the low-cost convict
labour. A typical sequence of events
was firstly to erect a cottage generally
made from local timbers, followed by
the replacement of this cottage with a
larger stone or brick dwelling on the
same site, nearby, or perhaps at a new
site if the first choice had proven to be
unsatisfactory. Sometimes the original
cottage was retained and expanded, and
occasionally the second dwelling was
replaced by an even grander structure. In
addition, there was the construction of
the ancillary buildings – barns, stables,
implement sheds, convict quarters or
perhaps a flour mill built on a nearby
river. Elizabeth's sketches record this
flurry of action and development. The
free settlers were a close supportive
community; Elizabeth often visited them
and was sometimes invited to stay over,
giving her the opportunity to sketch.

In about 1837 she sketched the
Hagley estate of William Thomas
Lyttleton (**plate 3**). Lyttleton, who came
from Hagley Hall in England in 1812,
received his land grant in the 1820s and
built this homestead on the property
in 1829.⁷ Most or all of the original
building has since been demolished.

In 1840 she delicately sketched
Ratho built by Alexander Reid in about
1826 (**plate 4**). Alexander, wife Mary,
daughter Jane and son Alexander
Jr emigrated to Van Diemen's Land
in 1821. He received a land grant,
consisting of two neighbouring
properties *Ratho* and *Humbie*. In 1822
Reid erected a turf cottage which was
their home for about three years.⁸
In about 1826 he built *Ratho*, an
absence of marble not preventing the
choice of large timber Ionic columns
to decorate the front porch. Elizabeth
captures this feature in her sketch
(**plate 4**).

Ratho, altered and enlarged over the
years, is the home of Australia's oldest
golf course, established in the 1820s.
Alexander Reid played the first game of





golf in Australia there using balls made from sewn hide stuffed with feathers.⁹

In 1840, Elizabeth drew a delightful study of a conifer tree with a castellated castle on a cliff-top beyond (**plate 5**).

William Kermode had been granted 2,000 acres near Ross in 1821. He was granted a further 1,000 acres in 1824 and bought 2,000 acres more, thus building up the property he called *Mona Vale*. By 1834 his first modest timber house had been replaced by a substantial brick building.¹⁰ This second house, beautifully sketched in its rural setting by Elizabeth about 1840, no longer exists (**plate 6**). The present huge Italianate mansion, designed by William Archer for his brother-in-law R.Q. Kermode and built in 1868, is the third main house.¹¹

The first land grant at Carrick was in 1818 and a decade later William Bryan built the wooden Carrick Mill on the bank of the River Liffey. Elizabeth's image of the mill, sketched before 1846, includes the nearby bridge (**plate 7**). The first bridge, a simple log structure, was replaced in the 1830s with a more substantial bridge, though still wooden. This is the bridge shown in the sketch. In May 1875 it collapsed; the 1929 floods carried away its replacement; and, in the 1950s another new bridge was built.¹²



- 5.** Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), [*Conifer tree with ruined castle beyond*], 1840. Pencil and watercolour wash on heavy wove paper, initialed EH and dated April 16 1840. Private collection
- 6.** Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Mona Vale* c 1840. Pencil on J Whatman wove paper dated 1837, inscribed "Mona Vale" and initialed EH. Private collection
- 7.** Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *The Carrick Mill on the River Liffey, Glencore, Van Diemen's Land*, pre 1846. Pen and ink on tinted paper, initials EH and title inscribed on original mount. Collection: Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office, Hobart AUTA001124074261 W800



8.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Scone Mill near Perth in V.D.L.* c 1848. Pen & ink, initials EH and title inscribed on original mount. Collection: Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office, Hobart AUTA001131830771 j2k

9.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *St James Church, Jericho*, 1849. Pencil and light watercolour wash on heavy wove paper, dated May 24 1849. Sold Deutscher & Hackett auction 24 April 2013 lot 89. Private collection

10.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Bowsden*, 1849. Pencil on wove paper, dated June 14 1849. Private collection



In about 1848 she sketched Scone Mill near Perth (**plate 8**). The Ritchie milling dynasty began with Thomas Ritchie who built this flour mill at Scone, lost to fire in 1870.¹³ Ritchie had arrived in Hobart in 1820 to claim property left to him on the death of his brother, Captain John Ritchie, who had been commandant at Port Dalrymple in 1812–14.¹⁴

Elizabeth's delightful 1849 sketch of St James' Church, Jericho (**plate 9**), is the only known image of the original church, built in 1838 and consecrated by Bishop William Grant Broughton on 10 May 1838. It was replaced, on the same site, in 1888. Dr John Hudspeth, his wife Mary and father Thomas are buried here.¹⁵

In 1849 she sketched the family home *Bowsden*, built by her father Dr John Maule Hudspeth in about 1834 and still standing (**plate 10**).

The first dwelling had been a humble affair, constructed of pise with a wattle and daub partition dividing the building into two rooms. A fire place was constructed of bricks made by the convict brickmaker, Thomas Last. ... The

roof was made of thatch and tied on with a particular type of bark grown on the property.¹⁶

Over the years this cottage was enlarged to cater for the increasing family and then finally replaced by the more spacious house sketched by Elizabeth. Fire destroyed the original cottage.

The property *Greenhill*, on the Macquarie River, was granted to James Reid but later sold to James Mackersey. Elizabeth's lovely sketch, dated March 1849, shows the original house, implement shed and barn built by Mackersey (**plate 11**). The house was demolished many years ago and replaced by an Edwardian dwelling. However the fine old barn still remains with its arch (and masked keystone) over the great door with the date 1835 carved into a corner stone.¹⁷ This sketch is probably the only image of the original house. The Mackerseys were old family friends; Elizabeth stayed with them in Van Diemen's Land and met up with them on her return to England.

In 1852 she sketched "The Enchanted Islands at Sunset", probably an imagined idyll (**plate 12**).

Also in the 1850s she painted the site of the future AMP Society (**plate 13**). The building shown no longer exists. This watercolour was presented or bequeathed to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery by Elizabeth's nephew Mr Wilfred Hugh Hudspeth in the 1950s.

Elizabeth's sketch of *Rothbury* (**plate 14**) is one of her last Van Diemen's Land works. *Rothbury*, on the western bank of the River Isis, was granted to Scottish settler James Cubbistan Sutherland in 1823. James built the house and developed the property, but eventually the yearning for his old home exceeded the exhilaration from the new, and he and his family returned to Scotland in the fifties.¹⁸

On 24 January 1854, she left Hobart to visit Mary Braidwood Mowle née Wilson at Eden, Twofold Bay NSW, staying until the beginning of March and returning to Hobart on 4 March 1854. Two weeks later she departed for England, leaving Van Diemen's Land forever. During her



stay at Eden she drew the Port, Customs House, and a scene of Twofold Bay in which the buildings of Boydtown can be seen in the distance.¹⁹

She had met Mary in Van Diemen's Land in 1844 and they became very close friends. Mary, seven years younger than Elizabeth, had been orphaned in NSW and went to live with her uncle George Wilson, who farmed at Mt Seymour, near Oatlands and quite close to the Hudspeths at Jericho, south of Oatlands. One can understand a rapport forming between a young orphan girl and one who had been separated from her family for almost her entire childhood.

11.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Greenhill, Macquarie River*, 1849. Pencil on wove paper, dated March 1849. Private collection

12.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *The Enchanted Islands at Sunset*, 1852. Pencil and light watercolour wash on embossed card, inscribed, signed and dated July 22 1852. Private collection



13.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858) (attributed), [*House on the corner of Collins & Elizabeth Sts, later site of the AMP Society building*] c 1850. Pencil and watercolour. Collection: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

14.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Rothbury, River Isis*, 1854. Pencil on wove paper, dated January 9 1854. Private collection

Elizabeth was bridesmaid at Mary's wedding to Stewart Mowle in May 1845. After her wedding, Mary had returned to NSW to live with her new husband.²⁰ Elizabeth and Mary Mowle were reunited when Mary and her children spent some months visiting her relatives at Mt Seymour in 1853, and again, when Elizabeth visited Twofold Bay in 1854.²¹

Mary Hudspeth Snr had earlier refused to allow her daughter Elizabeth to marry a Mr Orr because his brother, John Orr, had mistreated his wife, her younger daughter Mary Jnr.²²

Following the death of John Maule Hudspeth in 1837, leaving Mary Snr and her daughters to manage the farm,

then the death of Mary Snr from tuberculosis in 1853, and the suicide of her son John Coulter Hudspeth in the same year, the remaining family members determined to return to England. Elizabeth, brother Frank and aunt Miss Elizabeth Snr. sailed from Hobart on 18 March 1854 on the *Antipodes*.²³

In England, Elizabeth, although becoming unwell, embraced the social, cultural and tourist life of London, visiting many of the major attractions, especially art galleries, and also the theatre, botanical gardens and House of Commons.²⁴

On 7 November 1854 she left some of her Australian sketches with lithographers Messrs M & N Hanhart, returning to pay an "enormous sum" for the production of the lithographs which she then hawked around London print shops, until finally the J.C. Heite Repository agreed to take a few on trial.²⁵ These were based on her sketches of Twofold Bay, drawn on her last visit to Mary Mowle, and earlier views of Van Diemen's Land. The attractively portrayed Australian countryside may have proved too different to create interest, or perhaps there was a negative reaction to a forceful young woman striving in a man's world.

Several have found their way back to Australia (**plates 15 – 18**). These beautiful lithographs were purchased by the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts in July 1967, among Geoffrey Stillwell's first purchases after taking over curatorial responsibility for the collection in 1966.²⁶ Examples are also held in the National Library of Australia, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, State Library of NSW and in private collections.

Elizabeth Hudspeth's works may be just the second by an Australian female artist to be lithographed outside Australia, following Thomas Coleman Diddin's earlier lithograph of Louisa Clifton's *A view of Koombana Bay on Port Leschenault, Australind, Western Australia* c1842.²⁷

She continued to work in England and in September 1854 sketched a coastal scene of a storm with men rowing a boat

and a township (**plate 19**) and, probably at about the same time, drew Ashcombe Bridge (**plate 20**). Some of these later works likely returned to Tasmania with her brother Frank.²⁸

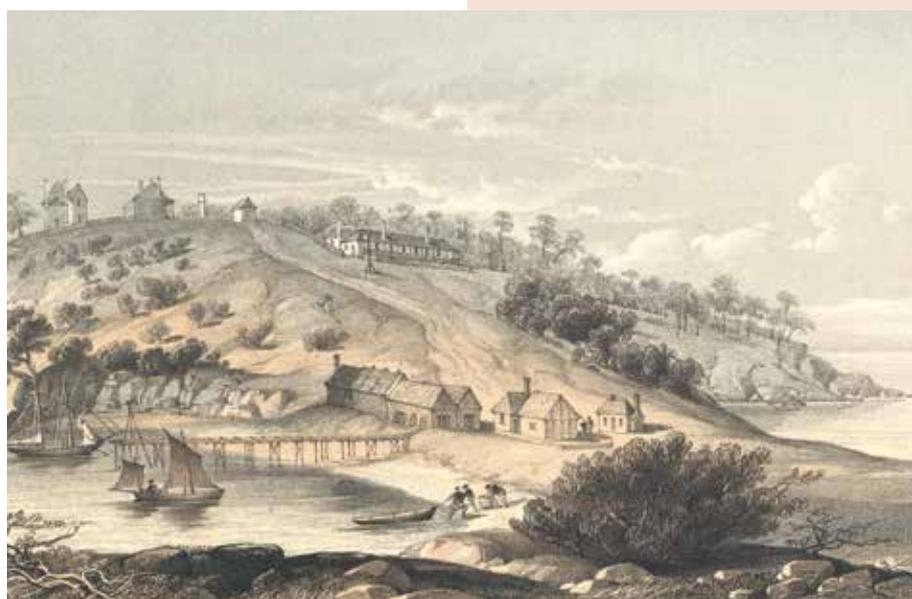
Elizabeth had lived at *Bowsden* until her mother died from tuberculosis and may have caught the contagious disease from her, as, after she returned to England, she was in bad health. It is also likely that she, in turn, infected her sisters Mary Jnr. and Catherine, as all three died in the same year.²⁹ Her brother Frank (later Canon of St David's Cathedral, Hobart) took her to Madeira in the Canary Islands hoping her health would improve but alas she died there on 29 May 1858. Of the original family of nine children, only two, Alice Eleanor and Frank, had outlived her.

Elizabeth was just 38 when she died. She had experienced severe difficulties in her relatively short life: being separated from her parents when two and not reunited until eleven; having her leg amputated without anaesthetic when twelve, and living out her life with a cork leg; taking on extra family responsibilities when her father died prematurely; enduring her mother's disapproval of Mr Orr, who had wanted to marry her and then remaining unwed and having to manage as a young single woman in a wild society; coping with the death of her mother and the suicide of her younger brother. Then finally, her unsuccessful battle with tuberculosis. In bearing these hardships, she displayed great determination and strength of character. Her great pleasure was her art, and her legacy, her beautiful, historical sketches of Van Diemen's Land.

Joan Kerr, in her essay in honour of Geoffrey Thomas Stillwell, when discussing a general lack of recognition of early colonial female artists wrote

Women miniaturists and sentimental botanical and natural history painters were at the bottom of the artistic ladder in the nineteenth century and they remain there today.

Then, when referring specifically to Sarah Ann Fogg and Elizabeth Hudspeth:



Such women neither modify nor confirm established myths; they simply have no place in our art histories.³⁰

This acknowledgement of Elizabeth's "original and valuable contribution to Australian Art History" will help to correct the neglect.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

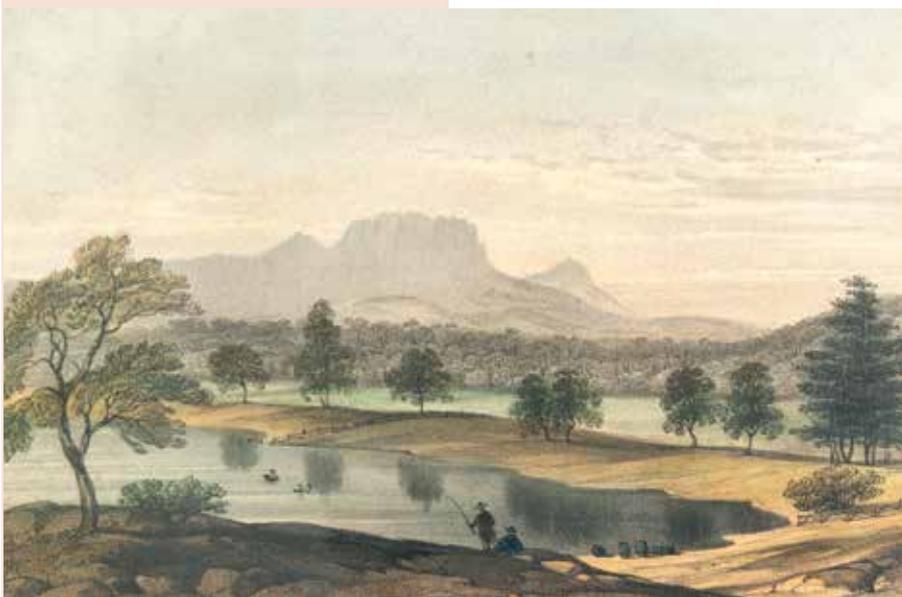
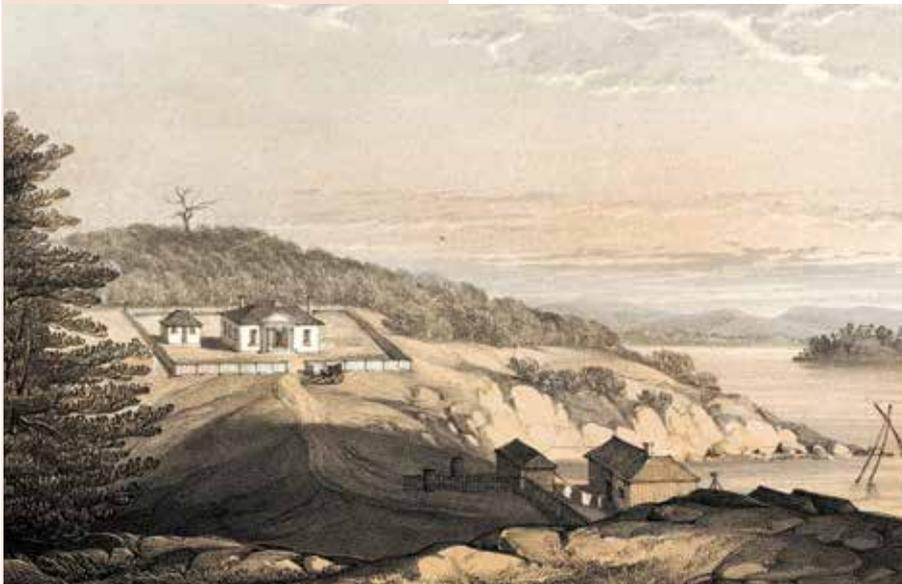
My sincere thanks to Stephanie Burbury, Caitlin Sutton, Jessica Walters, Graham Baring, Jill Cassidy, Mary Knights and Jacqui Ward.

15.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Boyd Town, Twofold Bay, Australia*, 1855. E.H. delt., M & N Hanhart lith. Collection: Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office, Hobart AUTA001124072075 W800

16.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Eden, Twofold bay, Australia*, 1855. E.H. delt., M & N Hanhart lith. Collection: Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts Collection, Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office, Hobart AUTA001124072091 W800



NOTES

- 1 W. H. Hudspeth. *Portrait of a Pioneer*, unpublished. Wilfred Hudspeth (1874-1954), a lawyer and historian, was the son of Rev Canon Frank Hudspeth and grandson of Dr John Hudspeth.
- 2 *Ibid* and Stephanie Burbury, *The History of Bowsden*, unpublished
- 3 Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, Customs Department – Register of ships arrivals with lists of passengers. CUS30-1-1.
- 4 W H Hudspeth claimed, and others followed, that she arrived in Australia under the care of Barclay, a watchmaker, and his wife. However, David Barclay arrived on the *Resource* in 1830 and my researches show that Elizabeth arrived on 31 May 1832 aboard the *Medway*, and while she is listed among the passengers, there are no Barclays. A seaman J Hudspeth is listed as a crewman. Elizabeth's uncle James Hudspeth emigrated to Hobart later, as did his father (Thomas) and brother (Alexander). James eventually settled in Melbourne. Perhaps he was looking after the very young Elizabeth (just 11) on this trip and checking out Tasmania before coming out permanently.
- 5 Heather Cumow, *Island Exile - Costantini*, Exhibition Catalogue, Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, July 1997.
- 6 Joan Kerr (ed), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1992.
- 7 E Graeme Robertson & Edith N Craig, *Early Houses of Northern Tasmania*, vol 1. Georgian House, Melbourne 1964.
- 8 E Graeme Robertson, *Early Buildings in Southern Tasmania*, vol 2. Georgian House, Melbourne 1970.
- 9 J N D Harrison & Frank Bolt, *The National Trust in Tasmania*. Rigby 1977.
- 10 *ADB* vol 2 p 49f.
- 11 National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), *Priceless Heritage. Historic Buildings of Tasmania*. Platypus Publications, Hobart 1964.
- 12 Jill Cassidy & Keith Preston, *Thematic Study of the Tasmanian Flour Milling Industry*, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston 2000.
- 13 *Ibid* & Alison Alexander (ed), *The Companion to Tasmanian History*. Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania 2005.
- 14 *ADB* vol 2 pp 382f.
- 15 Burbury, *op cit*.
- 16 *Ibid*.
- 17 Robertson & Craig, *op cit*.
- 18 *Ibid*.
- 19 Joan Kerr (ed), *Heritage. The National Woman's Art Book*. G+B Arts International 1995.
- 20 Patricia Clarke, *A Colonial Woman – The life and times of Mary Braidwood Mowle*. Allen & Unwin 1986.
- 21 *Ibid*.
- 22 W H Hudspeth, *op cit*.
- 23 Kerr, *op cit*.
- 24 Clarke, *op cit*.
- 25 *Ibid*.
- 26 Gillian Winter (ed), *Tasmanian Insights. Essays in honour of Geoffrey Thomas Stillwell*. State Library of Tasmania 1992.
- 27 *Beyond the Picket Fence - Australian Women's Art in the National Library Collections*. Exhibition at the National Library of Australia, Canberra 1995.
- 28 "The Rev Francis Hudspeth, M.A. formerly of

17.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Custom House, Eden, Twofold Bay, Australia*, 1855. E.H. delt., M & N Hanhart lith. Collection: Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office, Hobart. AUTA001124072083 W800

18.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Ben Lomond from Greenhill, Van Diemen's Land*, 1855. E.H. delt., M & N Hanhart lith. Collection: Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts Collection, Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office, Hobart AUTA001124071770 W800



Robert Stevens

is a retired metallurgist and business man. He studied metallurgy at RMIT and the

University of Melbourne, and has an MBA from Swinburne University of Technology. Interested in Australiana generally, his special area is the early colonial painters.

This is his first article in *Australiana*, which Robert dedicates to Margaret. You can email him at robertcstevens9@gmail.com



St David's Cathedral, passed away yesterday (Tuesday December 29) at his residence, Highfield, West Hobart, aged 75 years, after a protracted period of enfeebled health and mental vigor. The deceased clergyman was born in Tasmania, the son of the late Dr. Hudspeth and commenced his education at Christ College, Hobart. Later he went to England, and graduated with honours at St. John's College, Cambridge in 1859 and in 1866 proceeded to his M.A. degree. Upon his return to Tasmania he was, for a time, assistant master of the Hutchins School, and was ordained by Mr. Nixon, the first bishop of Tasmania, after which he became assistant curate of St. David's and subsequently incumbent of St. John's, New Town. He was one of the first canons of St. David's upon the formation of the Cathedral chapter and,

being a very scholarly man, took an active part in educational matters in the state and was an examination reader under the Council of Education in the days preceding the establishment of the University of Tasmania. Many interesting papers and articles emanated from his pen, including a history of the Hutchins School, and he wrote for the "Church News". Canon Hudspeth was a very generous, warm-hearted man and made a great number of friends. Of late years he had been wholly incapacitated from ministerial work, having had to resign his incumbency and position of Canon at the Cathedral. He leaves a widow with two sons and five daughters. The funeral takes place today. The service and internment will be at St. John's, New Town." *Mercury* 30 Dec 1908 p 5. 29 Burbury, *op cit*.

19.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *A Storm*, 1854. Pencil on wove paper, inscribed "Storm" and dated September 19, 1854. Private collection

20.

Elizabeth Hudspeth (1820-1858), *Ashcombe Bridge, Devonshire*, c 1855. Pencil and light watercolour wash on heavy wove paper, initialed on back. Private collection

Colonial Rarities



Outstanding colonial cedar **Gentleman's Press** c 1830, Hunter Valley origin.
 Full cedar construction, featuring extensive book matching, knurling and cross banding. This exemplary specimen of early Colonial cabinet making showcases the beauty of early Australian cedar.
 Height 234 width 138.5 depth 62 cm

By appointment
 Philip Wheatley, Newcastle NSW
 02 4957 0165 | 0417 205 298
 bpw@colonialrarities.com
 www.colonialrarities.com