

Henry and Jeannie Thielemann¹

Henry Thielemann² was born in Wolfhagen, near Hesse, Germany^{3 4} and was the son of a baker.⁵ ⁶ He appears to have first come to South Australia in about 1879^{7 8}, and was described as a “bread and biscuit maker”.⁹

Jeannie Brown-Harley was born in Scotland on 17 July 1869.^{10 11 12} She arrived in New South Wales with her mother Isabella and step-father Richard Scott in 1879, when she was 10.¹³ They moved to South Australia and it is likely that Jeannie met Henry in Kupunda.^{14 15}

Henry arrived came to Western Australia in September 1886¹⁶ and was shortly after¹⁷ running a bakery from a building where the Motor Museum now stands,¹⁸ which was owned by the estate of John Hardey.¹⁹ At the time, Henry was regarded as “industrious and capable”.²⁰

¹ For this paper, I am grateful for the research paper of Heather Harvey (for the Residency Museum “Remembering Them” project). This paper incorporates all of Heather’s material.

² His full name was Charles Henry, but he called himself Henry (or also Heinrich).

³ He was the second son of Christian Thielemann: Eastern Districts Chronicle 12 March 1887, p.2.

⁴ In 1886, his family was trying to find him and said he was born in “Altona” in 1852 and last wrote from Kapunda. Altona is in Hamburg, Germany which is nowhere near Wolfhagen. Australische Zeitung 24 March 1886, p.2.

⁵ Rica Erickson: Dictionary of Western Australians, p.3033.

⁶ The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians says his date of birth was 3 January 1862(?) and he learnt his trade in London.

⁷ There was mail waiting for him in March 1879: Australische Zeitung 4 March 1879, p.4.

⁸ Heather Harvey says that his name appeared in a crew list on the ship *Jacobine* at the Port of Sydney in 1876 with his occupation listed as cook and his age as 22. Other records show his year of birth being closer to 1862.

⁹ In at least two lists: Heather Harvey.

¹⁰ She was the eldest daughter of Francis Harley of Glasgow, Scotland: Eastern Districts Chronicle 12 March 1887, p.2.

¹¹ Eastern Districts Chronicle 12 March 1887, p.2.

¹² She was also called Jane. The Scottish census for 1871 shows her as the daughter of Frances and Isabella Harley. According to Heather Harvey, some time between 1871 and 1879, her mother married Richard Scott.

¹³ Immigration Deposit Journals 1853-1900, Deposit Journal 1879.

¹⁴ Henry was employed as a clerk for someone called Thomas in Kapunda in 1886: Kapunda Herald 15 June 1886, p.3.

¹⁵ He may have first gone to Sydney before coming to Western Australia: Daily Telegraph 7 July 1886, p.4.

¹⁶ He arrived in Albany on 26 September 1886: Crew and Passenger lists.

¹⁷ Eastern Districts Chronicle 27 October 1911, p.2.

¹⁸ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 4 February 1893, p.4.

¹⁹ The deed of assignment of sale was registered in 1865: Landgate Deeds Index VI/302/1872 dated 24 April 1865. However, Hardey was noted as the proprietor earlier than that, in May 1864 in an advertisement offering the property for sale: West Australian Times, 12 May 1864, p.2. The property was described as “substantially built cottage, oven and premises”. Hardey died in May 1874 but the property continued to be owned by his estate.

²⁰ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 3 November 1911, p.2.

He was not the only German in Western Australia or York. Another was hairdresser Carl Heiden whose premises were in Central Buildings.²¹ Construction of the railway line in 1885 had been assisted by “a good class of German immigrants”.²²

Jeannie apparently followed Henry and they married in York in March 1887.²³ At the time, he was 35²⁴ and she was 18. There is a photograph of the two of them, most likely taken around the time of their marriage.

In February 1888, Henry advertised for a licence to run a boarding house “in the shop or rooms that I now occupy, situated at Avon Terrace, York, next to the Police Station.”²⁵ In March 1888, he was advertising for boarders.²⁶ Presumably Jeannie was running the boarding house.

Their first two children, Isabella Henrietta and Charles Henry, were born in 1888 and 1891.²⁷

From February 1889, Henry was earning extra money as pound keeper for the Council.^{28 29}

On 30 January 1893, a fire broke out at Thielemann’s bakery at about 1:30 am. Its origin was some sparks escaping from the furnace in the bakehouse, and setting alight a sack suspended on a wall. Within a very short space of time the flames were reaching the roof, which was composed of shingles on the inside and outside galvanised iron. A “chinaman” residing close by saw the volumes of smoke emanating from the building and gave the alarm. The fire-bell was started.

“With commendable promptitude, a large concourse of surrounding neighbours were very shortly on the scene, and by united action extinguished the flames with copious supplies of water. The whole of the Government offices and police buildings at one time were in great danger, but fortunately the wind lulled and those in attendance made the most of the opportunity and quickly subdued the flames. The damage done to the building is but very slight, but the consequences would undoubtedly have been far more serious had the fire not been arrested in its infancy.” “In distinguishing the fire in question, the well on the premises gave out, whereas had there been communication with the river by means of a hose the supply would have been almost inexhaustible. There is no telling when the occasion may again rise so therefore I hope that the proper authorities will at once move in

²¹ York Cemetery, Historic Walk Trail, York Society, 2006, p.13.

²² Eastern Districts Chronicle 13 October 1888, p.5.

²³ Eastern Districts Chronicle 5 March 1887 p.2; 12 March 1887, p.2.

²⁴ Assuming he was born in 1852, so he was possibly younger.

²⁵ West Australian, 10 February 1888, p.2.

²⁶ Eastern Districts Chronicle 10 March 1888, p.8.

²⁷ Rica Erickson: Dictionary of Western Australians, p.3033.

²⁸ Western Mail 16 February 1889, p.18; Eastern Districts Chronicle 15 June 1889, p.5.

²⁹ He also unsuccessfully tendered for the right to farm the Commonage and issue cattle and timber licences: Eastern Districts Chronicle 11 January 1890, p.5.

the matter, and procure for the town a convenience which will greatly minimise the risk of losses by fire in this locality. Might I add that a Fire Brigade be organised. Similar institutions exist elsewhere and prove of incalculable service to the community generally.”³⁰

Thielemann published that he wished to “heartily thank the gentlemen who so ably assisted in extinguishing the late fire at my premises.”³¹

A few months later, perhaps to hide the fire damage, Thielemann made some additions to his premises and added a verandah over the footpath.³² The improvements included a show window, “the contents of which have been skilfully arranged”.³³

Perhaps to show off his new verandah, Thielemann was photographed with his children and with what looks like Jeannie sitting behind them in the near background. Judging by the age of the children, the photograph is most likely taken around 1894 when Henry was 42 and Jeannie 25.³⁴

Their building shows advertises Bread and also Cakes Made to Order (and something else difficult to read). It also has the sign “Boarding House”, indicating Jeannie was probably very much part of these businesses. The business was called: H Thielemann Baker & Grocer.

Another three children, Lou James, Sophie and Elsie were born in 1893, and 1895 and 1897.³⁵

In July 1897, someone scattered wheat which had been poisoned with strychnine so that 50 of Thielemann’s 125 fowls died. He offered a reward of 20 pounds for any person supplying the necessary information to convict the “scoundrel who perpetrated the villainous act”.^{36 37}

In 1896, the mining boom busted and York ceased to be a bustling town. Thielemann’s business went into decline and he started drinking wine and “his whole nature changed”. This also coincided with relations between Britain and Germany deteriorating. From 1898 onwards, Germany began to create a battle fleet to compete with the Royal Navy and a shipbuilding arms race with Britain began. Britain entered the 20th century regarding Germany as its most serious potential aggressor.³⁸

³⁰ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 4 February 1893, p.2.

³¹ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 4 February 1893, p.4.

³² Eastern Districts Chronicle, 6 May 1893, p.5.

³³ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 17 June 1893, p.4.

³⁴ In 1894, Henry bought Duckham’s brickyard for 220 pounds: Eastern Districts Chronicle 14 April 1884, later leasing it out: Heather Harvey.

³⁵ Rica Erickson: Dictionary of Western Australians, p.3033.

³⁶ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 27 July 1895, p.4.

³⁷ IN 1898, Henry unsuccessfully ran for the North Ward of the Council: Eastern Districts Chronicle 26 November 1899

³⁸ Website: The naval race between Britain and Germany before the First World War.

This led to several incidents in 1901 where he slandered a man called Quigley³⁹ who sued Thielemann for 2,000 pounds for slander. He also slandered another man called Barr who sued him for 2,500 pounds for slander.⁴⁰

So in 1901, to protect his assets, he signed a document assigning his business and all his other property to Jeannie.⁴¹

For a while, Henry and Jeannie had their own bank account but Henry's kept going into overdraft, and so this was closed and the only bank account was Jeannie's.^{42 43}

Their last child, Muriel was born in 1901.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, Thielemann was attacked for being German. Peter Plate,⁴⁵ a fellow German, who was an assistant in Thielemann's shop had problems with his neighbour Charles Cunningham. Plate kicked Cunningham who was swearing at him, calling him a "bloody German". Cunningham also assaulted Thielemann. He was fined.⁴⁶ In another incident, Cunningham damaged Thielemann's fence.⁴⁷

In April 1905, Thielemann was summoned for keeping his town lots 41, 42 and 43 (presumably where he lived, and kept his chicken and pigs) in such a state as to be injurious to his health. He admitted the offence and was fined.⁴⁸

Later, in 1905, Thielemann was assaulted at the Railway Hotel. A man called Reeves rushed in, and without any provocation, called Thielemann an objectionable name and then struck him.⁴⁹ Thielemann could also use obscene language as he was fined later in 1905 for doing this.⁵⁰ He was also charged with carrying firearms without a licence and cautioned by the Magistrate to stop carrying a gun around.⁵¹

In December 1905, Henry Thielemann was proceeding by horse towards Mackie Siding on the Eastern Railway when he "met with a painful accident".

"The horse he was riding, it is supposed fell, Mr Thielemann sustained severe injuries to his head and body. He was picked up in an unconscious state and conveyed to his

³⁹ Heather Harvey suggests this was likely to be Charles Quigley who had taken over Monger's Steam Flour Mill in 1897 until his retirement from business in December 1903. She could not find any reports of Henry being summoned for slander by any person.

⁴⁰ Eastern Districts Chronicle 27 October 1911, p.2.

⁴¹ West Australian 26 October 1911, p.9.

⁴² Eastern Districts Chronicle 27 October 1911, p.2.

⁴³ West Australian 26 October 1911, p.9.

⁴⁴ Rica Erickson: Dictionary of Western Australians, p.3033.

⁴⁵ There is no reference to him in the Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians.

⁴⁶ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 8 March 1902, p.2.

⁴⁷ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 15 March 1902, p.3.

⁴⁸ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 21 April 1906, p.2.

⁴⁹ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 30 September 1905, p.3.

⁵⁰ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 14 October 1905, p.2.

⁵¹ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 21 October 1905, p.2.

residence in York, where he at present lies under medical treatment. Slow progress is being made towards recovery.”⁵²

Henry could not work for two years.⁵³ His mental condition gradually became worse and he suffered from “illusions and hallucinations”.⁵⁴

From 1907, the bakery business was carried on solely by Jeannie “on her own account”.⁵⁵

In 1907 the council ordered that both buildings in which the bakery business was being operated be removed “owing to their dilapidated condition”.⁵⁶ Jeannie had to move.⁵⁷

Jeannie submitted plans for a new building on land she owned across the road, which plans were approved subject to review by the building inspector.^{58 59} Tenders were called in January 1908⁶⁰ and the successful tenderer was “Mr Clark”, the contract price being 1,196 pounds 10 shillings. Work began immediately.^{61 62}

During construction, a plumber named Butcher slipped and fell from the second floor, sustaining nasty scalp wounds.⁶³

Jeannie occupied the shop on the right hand side with her oven at the rear.⁶⁴ You can see her oven in a shop in the room now used by the hairdresser. The shop on the left was occupied by Mr A Ellis, a hairdresser and tobacconist.⁶⁵

Jeannie did not live upstairs but in a house in Monger Street.⁶⁶

In November 1908, Jeannie Thielemann learnt the shocking news that her mother, who lived in Midland, had been murdered by her husband, Jeannie’s step-father, Richard Scott. He had been displaying eccentric behaviour for some time. On Friday the 13th of November 1908, Scott and Jeannie’s mother started arguing. The daughter, 15, went to a neighbour’s for assistance. Scott attacked Jeannie’s mother with a razor in the bedroom. The two of them struggled from there into the street, where Mrs Scott received a gash in the throat

⁵² Eastern Districts Chronicle, 23 December 1905, p.2.

⁵³ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 3 November 1911, p.2.

⁵⁴ Daily News 25 October 1911, p.6

⁵⁵ Eastern Districts Chronicle 27 October 1911, p.2.

⁵⁶ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 20 April 1907, p.3; 11 May 1907, p.3; 8 June 1907, p.4; 21 September 1907, p.3.

⁵⁷ The old building was demolished in December 1907: Eastern Districts Chronicle 7 December 1907, p.2.

⁵⁸ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 23 November 1907, p.2. The newspaper report records that the plans were submitted by Henry.

⁵⁹ Eastern Districts Chronicle 7 December 1907, p.2.

⁶⁰ Eastern Districts Chronicle 11 January 1908, p.2.

⁶¹ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 1 February 1908, p.2.

⁶² Jeannie offered at auction several properties in August 1907, possibly to assist in funding the construction of the two new shops and residences: Eastern Districts Chronicle 3 August 1907.

⁶³ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 14 March 1908, p.2.

⁶⁴ This can be concluded from the 1923 photograph of the successor business, Lansell & Hayden.

⁶⁵ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 23 May 1908, p.2; 6 June 1908, p.4; 4 September 1909, p.1.

⁶⁶ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 2 May 1908, p.2.

and fell to the ground, and died. Scott, distressed, cut his own throat, and the two of them were found in the street with their throats cut, Scott was still alive but could not speak. Jeannie's mother was dead.⁶⁷

The last time the bakery was advertised in Henry's name (H Thielemann) was on 4 September 1909.⁶⁸ In 1909, Henry was declared to be of unsound mind and was ordered to be confined in Claremont Lunatic Asylum.

Jeannie continued to be in charge of the business and also collected money owing to Henry totalling 35 pounds.

Jeannie commenced advertising as "J Thielemann, York Bakery", in November 1909.⁶⁹ She expanded the goods she sold to include "Xmas Groceries, Fruits, Cakes, Confectionary, etc, etc"⁷⁰ and described herself as "Grocer, Baker and Confectioner".⁷¹

On 4 January 1911, Henry was discharged from the asylum but made no attempt to go back to Jeannie.⁷² Instead, he lived in Waroona⁷³ and asked for money that Jeannie had collected on his behalf to be paid to him, but she refused to pay. He alleged that while he was at the asylum, Jeannie had not visited him once.

Henry then commenced legal proceedings in the Supreme Court to recover the bakery and other property and the money Jeannie had collected on his behalf. Of course, Jeannie produced the 1901 deed of assignment under which he had assigned all his property to her to evade creditors.^{74 75}

Henry claimed he signed the deed when he was insane but this was not accepted. His barrister then argued that a clause in the deed should be set aside or construed against Henry because it was so unreasonable to him. Justice McMillan said: "Give me an authority which empowers me to set aside a clause making over all the furniture a man may become possessed of during his lifetime. Do you say that this is so unreasonable that the man must be protected against himself?"

Justice McMillan found that Jeannie should pay her minor amounts of money that she had collected on his behalf and she had to return two cows, a brickmaking mill, a piano, a silver

⁶⁷ Daily News, 14 November 1908, p.5; Kalgoorlie Miner 14 November 1908, p.5; Coolgardie Miner 14 November 1908, p.3. Eastern Districts Chronicle 14 November 1908, p.2.

⁶⁸ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 4 September, 1909, p.1.

⁶⁹ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 16 October 1909, p.1; 6 November 1909, p.1.

⁷⁰ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 8 January 1910, p.4.

⁷¹ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 18 March 1910. P.4.

⁷² Eastern Districts Chronicle, 3 November 1911, p.2.

⁷³ West Australian 26 October 1911, p.9.

⁷⁴ Daily News 25 October 1911, p.6; West Australian 26 October 1911, p.9; Daily News 26 October 1911, p.6; Eastern Districts Chronicle 27 October 1911, p.2; West Australian 3 November 1911, p.4; Eastern Districts Chronicle 3 November 1911, p.2; Eastern Districts Chronicle 10 November 1911, p.3.

⁷⁵ Heather Harvey says that at the time, Henry was on the 1912 electoral roll of Waroona, his occupation being listed as baker.

matchbox, a cart and some rings, but that Jeannie was the owner of the bakery and all the other property. No costs order was made.

The case, said Justice McMillan “might be of some use if only to bring home to the minds of those people who adopt such methods of meeting their liabilities [that is, assigning all their property to their wives], that such a course might turn out to be disadvantageous to them if they subsequently happened to fall out with their wives.”⁷⁶

Henry continued to be the one named as running the business in the Western Australian directory after which it was shown as Mrs J Thielemann , baker and grocer in 1912.⁷⁷

Jeannie owned other property and subdivided a property abutting Osnaburg, Eleventh and Bland roads in 1913.⁷⁸

Jeannie continued to trade as “Mrs Thielemann”⁷⁹ until 1916, when she went into partnership with Frank Ashbolt⁸⁰ and the business was renamed Thielemann & Co,⁸¹ but this partnership was dissolved on 3 May 1918, with Jeannie to discharge the liabilities.^{82 83}

Jeannie continued to trade on her own. The Avon Gazette noted in an article “Christmas at the Shops” in December 1919:

“Messrs Thielemann and Co cater more for the ladies, and here will be found a fine display of dainty confectionary that will tempt even a confirmed dyspeptic. Here will also be found all those special lines of currants, sultanas, raisins, spices etc, so necessary for a good Christmas pudding.”

The last year the business appeared in the Post Office directory was 1922.⁸⁴

In 1921, Jeannie’s business was insolvent⁸⁵ but she avoided bankruptcy by selling the business to Lansell & Hayden.⁸⁶ There is a photograph of this store taken in 1923.

Jeannie Thielemann moved to Perth⁸⁷ and died on 21 June 1939^{88 89} at the age of 70.

⁷⁶ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 3 November 1911, p.2.

⁷⁷ Post Office directory for 1912, p. 438.

⁷⁸ Eastern Districts Chronicle 24 January 1913, p.4.

⁷⁹ Eastern Districts Chronicle, 17 November 1911, p.1.

⁸⁰ Eastern Districts Chronicle 10 May 1918, p.2.

⁸¹ Post Office directory for 1916 p. 279.

⁸² Eastern Districts Chronicle 10 May 1918, p.2.

⁸³ Avon Gazette and York Times 11 May 1918.

⁸⁴ Post Office directory for 1922, p.593; Post Office directory for 1923, p.618.

⁸⁵ West Australian 2 June 1921.

⁸⁶ Eastern Districts Chronicle 4 November 1921; 25 November 1921.

⁸⁷ In 1922, Jeannie and her daughter Elsie and son Charles Henry were enrolled on the 1922 electoral roll, Fremantle / Balcatta at 387 Fitzgerald St, along with her future sons in law, George Preacher and Reuben Collins.

⁸⁸ West Australian 20 June 1942, p.1.

Henry moved to New Zealand in 1914, where he may have been interned, being German. He became naturalised as a New Zealander and died there in 1942⁹⁰ at the age of 90.

Their son Charles Henry Thielemann served in the AIF in the first world war.

Rob Garton Smith

President

The York Society (Inc)

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⁸⁹ Her properties were auctioned on 17 October 1939: York Leader and Quairading and Dangin Herald 13 October 1939, p.2.

⁹⁰ Registration 1942/28907. See Ancestry.com family tree of Christine Lewis.