



## **PARRAMATTA FEMALE FACTORY HISTORY FAST FACTS**

### **FAST FACT SHEET**

- **Female convicts transported to the Colonies of NSW and Van Diemen's Land - 24,960**
- **13 convict female factory sites**
  - **Colony of New South Wales: Parramatta (2 factories), Newcastle, Bathurst, Port Macquarie (2 factories), and Moreton Bay (2 factories).**
  - **Colony of Van Diemen's Land: Hobart Town, Cascades, Launceston, Ross and Georgetown.**
- **An estimated 9,000 convict women were in female factories**
- **An estimated 5,000 convict women went through Parramatta Female Factory**
- **An estimated in 5 to 1 in 7 Australians are related to female factory women.**
- **The female factories were factories because:**
  - **the work was done by convict women and these women were the primary reason for the factories**
  - **Each location participated in a part or all of the weaving manufacturing process. Large factories like Parramatta (1 and 2) and Cascades did the whole process from spinning to the final woven product. Smaller factories primarily did spinning**
- **Factory period was 1804-1856**
- **First Female Factory – Gaol Green (Prince Alfred Park) Parramatta in 1804, a room above the gaol which held 9 looms and 40 common wheels**
- **Second Parramatta Female Factory - First purpose built factory for convict women by convict men, for convict women. Three main factory phases**
  - **Greenway design – first stone laid by Governor Macquarie in 1818. The women moved in in 1821**
  - **Governor Brisbane commissioned new building added for third class (the one saved by the action group) and 1823 authorised the women to be separated into 3 classes.**
  - **The factory closed as a factory in 1848**
- **Children's story as well. Approaches to children changed over time. In some cases the women were able to bring their children when transported. The approach was to remove children from the influence of their mothers - girls to the Female Orphan School at Parramatta, the boys to the boys orphanage at Cabramatta, and Catholic children in the 1840s to the Roman Catholic Orphan School. In the 1820s up to three years old they could**



**stay in the factory. By the late 1830s with massive increase in transportation older children were able to stay.**

- **Riots - the site of possibly the first female workers riot in Australia (1827) Records of 5 riots identified - 1827, 1831, 1833, 1836 and 1843.**
- **Factory Functions - the Parramatta Female Factory was a hospital, place of assignment to service the NSW colony, a location to request a wife, a place of secondary punishment and a factory.**
- **Hospital - first dedicated female health service in the colony. Common use was for 'lying in' before giving birth. Common diseases included lung complaints, diphtheria and typhus (known as gaol fever).**
- **Work - The women spun and wove wool, linen and linsey woolsey for blankets, slop clothing (convict clothes), sails and woolen stockings. They also did straw plaiting for articles such as bonnets, laundry, sewing and daily domestic duties in the factory.**
  - **Third class also broke rocks and picked oakum - taking tar out of ships rope and separating the fibres.**
- **Classes – Originally there were the factory women and a merit class (Governor Macquarie regulations). With Governor Brisbane the factory was split into 3 classes with the intent to better control the women:**
  - **1<sup>st</sup> class was mainly for women waiting for or returned from assignment. By the 1830s almost full shiploads of women were being sent straight to the factory.**
  - **2<sup>nd</sup> class consisted of women who committed minor offences in the colony, misbehaved while in 1<sup>st</sup> class or were 3<sup>rd</sup> class who had been upgraded.**
  - **3<sup>rd</sup> class was for women who had reoffended in the Colony (such as prostitution, pregnancy, bodily harm or theft of property with high value). Second class women who were frequently insolent could also be demoted to 3<sup>rd</sup> class.**
- **Punishable Offences - These offences for convict women include drunk and disorderly, continued drunkenness, pregnancy while on assignment, prostitution, forgery, theft or bodily harm.**
- **Punishments - Common punishments ranged from 14 days in solitary (originally in paired solitary cells and later in the Governor Gipps 1830s commissioned cells) to a number of years in third class. Head shaving was also used as a form of control.**
- **The Australian spirit of tenacity, surviving against the odds, sense of humour, belief in equity – mateship – and questioning authority can be traced back to these women. This legacy is a significant part of the Australian character and values. The story of the factory women is a significant part of the Australian character and values. The story of the factory women is a significant Australian story.**