Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00674

Clifton, Louisa

(1814 - 1880)

Born	18140926, London England United Kingdom
Died	18801012, Geraldton Western Australia Australia
Occupation	Artist, Diarist

Summary

Louisa Clifton was born in London in 1814 to Marshall Waller Clifton and his wife Elinor (Bell); she was the third of their fifteen children. Her father was descended from an aristocratic Nottingham family, and her mother Elinor was a Quaker. Louisa grew up in London, then Boulogne (France). In 1841 she travelled with her parents and several siblings to help found Australind, a new colony in the south-west corner of Western Australia. Marshall Waller Clifton was part of a company that had been formed in order to buy a tract of land on the West Australian coast, sub-divide it into allotments, and establish a new town, of which he would be the Chief Commissioner.

Louisa Clifton kept a diary (1840-41) in which she described the family's departure from Capecure, France , the voyage on the "Parkfield", and the settlement in Western Australia. As Lucy Frost noted, 'to read the Australian section of the journal is to watch an orderly English gentlewoman learn to live with confusion.' Louisa Clifton also sketched and painted, and the few works of hers that survive are a valuable historical record of the early colonial settlement in Western Australia. Her sisters Mary and Elinor also painted, and their brother William was a photographer.

On 1 June, 1842, Louisa Clifton married George Eliot, who was Government Resident for the district of Bunbury, where the couple then lived at Bury Hill. The Western Australian Company that Louisa's father was so heavily involved in ceased operations in 1843. Its assets were liquidated, and Australind became a ghost town. The Eliots moved to Geraldton in 1870, where George took up a post as Registered Magistrate. Louisa died there in 1880.

Published resources

Book Section
The Colonial Eye: A Topographical and Artistic Record of the Life and Landscape of Western Australia, Chapman, Barbara, 1979

Louisa Clifton: Fatigue and Battle at Australind, Frost, Lucy, 1984

Thesis
Awe, Disillusionment and Fear: Attitude to Landscape Among Christian Colonists of Far South-West Australia, Grellier, Jane, 1996

Book
A Friend Indeed: Louisa Clifton of Australind W.A., Russo, George, 1995

Journal Article
Diary of Louisa Clifton: Some Unique Impressions, Henn, Percy U., 1941

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Diary of Louisa Clifton, 1840-1841 [manuscript]

State Library of Western Australia
George Russo papers

Author Details
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