

Inspiring poet Eliza Hamilton Dunlop (1796-1880) authored “Aboriginal Mother” to highlight colonial violence and hypocrisy. A query about Enrolled Pensioner Guard (EPG) Jackson Winder and his wife Elizabeth Jacobs led to this amazingly strong, resolute and just woman.

Irish born Eliza Hamilton’s father was Solomon Hamilton, when widowed he went to India as a judge in the Supreme Court, leaving Eliza with family whilst providing financial support.

Eliza’s first marriage saw her migrate to Australia where she was widowed later marrying David Dunlop a police magistrate and protector of Aborigines.

In 1838, 28 Wirrayaraay people died in a massacre in northern New South Wales. Moved by evidence in court about a mother and baby who survived the massacre, Dunlop crafted “Aboriginal Mother” condemning settlers who professed Christianity but murdered and conspired to cover up their crime – some of her verse:

*Now, hush thee—or the pale-faced men Will hear thy piercing wail,
And what would then thy mother’s tears or feeble strength avail!
Oh, could’st thy little bosom that mother’s torture feel,
Or could’st thou know thy father lies struck down by English steel*

Eliza was roundly criticised in the Press, fighting back she said she hoped the poem would awake sympathies for a people who were “rendered desperate and revengeful by continued acts of outrage”. She continued to author many works -see the links below about Eliza.

In 1820, she went to India to see her father. She found out he had died the same year and that she had two Indian half-sisters. One wonders if this shaped her views regarding racial intolerance. Solomon provided for all his family including his Indian wife Maria and daughters Mary and Charlotte, with a one-ninth share in his estate and a house with effects.

This story started when the EPG Group was asked did EPGs like Jackson Winder marry people with Indian ancestry ... the answer is of course. Over 200 EPGs saw service in India, 100 were in the East India Company, also employing Solomon Hamilton.

Jackson Winder’s wife Eliza Jacobs was the daughter of an East India Company Sargent and a daughter of Mary Hamilton (above)

References

A Forgotten Colonial Woman Poet <https://tintean.org.au/2015/11/06/a-forgotten-colonial-woman-poet/>

Hidden women of history: the Irish Australian poet who shone a light on colonial violence <https://theconversation.com/hidden-women-of-history-eliza-hamilton-dunlop-the-irish-australian-poet-who-shone-a-light-on-colonial-violence-161592>