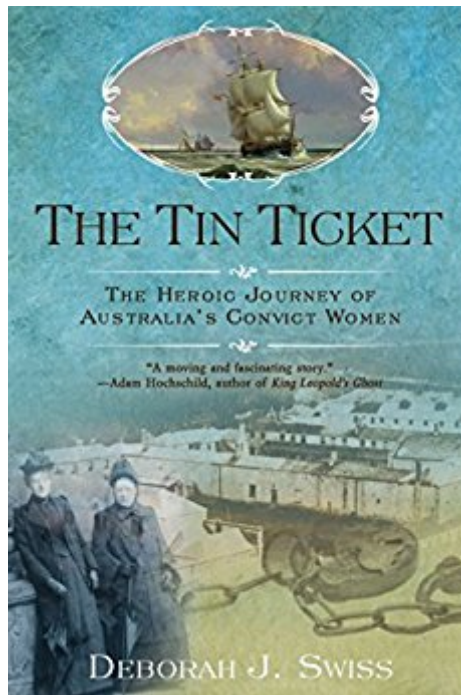




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# The Tin Ticket: The Heroic Journey Of Australia's Convict Women



## Synopsis

Historian Deborah J. Swiss tells the heartbreaking, horrifying, and ultimately triumphant story of the women exiled from the British Isles and forced into slavery and savagery—who created the most liberated society of their time. Agnes McMillan and Janet Houston were convicted for shoplifting. Bridget Mulligan stole a bucket of milk; Widow Ludlow Tedder, eleven spoons. For their crimes, they would be sent not to jail, but to ships teeming with other female convicts. Tin tickets, stamped with numbers, were hung around the women's necks, and the ships set out to carry them to their new home: Van Diemen's Land, later known as Tasmania, part of the British Empire's crown jewel, Australia. Men outnumbered women nine to one there, and few "proper" citizens were interested in emigrating. The deportation of thousands of petty criminals—the vast majority nonviolent first offenders—provided a convenient solution for the government. Crossing Shark-infested waters, some died in shipwrecks during the four-month journey, or succumbed to infections and were sent to a watery grave. Others were impregnated against their will by their captors. They arrived as nothing more than property. But incredibly, as the years passed, they managed not only to endure their privation and pain but to thrive on their own terms, breaking the chains of bondage, and forging a society that treated women as equals and led the world in women's rights. The Tin Ticket takes us to the dawn of the nineteenth century and into the lives of Agnes McMillan, whose defiance and resilience carried her to a far more dramatic rebellion; Agnes's best friend Janet Houston, who rescued her from the Glasgow wynds and was also transported to Van Diemen's Land; Ludlow Tedder, forced to choose just one of her four children to accompany her to the other side of the world; Bridget Mulligan, who gave birth to a line of powerful women stretching to the present day. It also tells the tale of Elizabeth Gurney Fry, a Quaker reformer who touched all their lives. Ultimately, it is the story of women discarded by their homeland and forgotten by history—who, by sheer force of will, become the heart and soul of a new nation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I really really loved this book! The descriptions of the conditions that the characters lived in broke my heart - not sure how these women could have survived even a few days in those conditions let alone years and years. But, they were tough women with unstoppable spirits and I especially liked the line in the book that reads "Ludlow consistently practiced the 11th commandment - Do what ever it takes to provide for your child." The book really makes you think and see what was really going on with the 'classes' in England/Scotland/Ireland between 1800-1875, and how far we have come in the past 150-200 years, in prison reform, medicine, and women's rights - heck, human rights! The descriptions of the polluted conditions in London, along with the beauty, yet almost uninhabitable terrain of Tasmania and Melbourne were so vivid and really placed you right in the heart of those times. And the stories of the women's journies across the sea from England to Tasmania - it was amazing anyone was able to walk off those ships after 4 months being kept in the bowels of the ships. The story does show, and it's so hard to believe that people could be so cold, manipulative, hard-hearted and dismissive of other humans just because they were poor. But the best part is that the story shows how no matter how horrific the conditions you place people in, you can't break their spirit or their pride and the desire to survive is overwhelming. This is a great great book if you want an inside view of what took place during that timeframe - I feel like I learned a lot and have a new appreciation of Australia, Tasmania and how it was 'really' settled!

I so wanted to stick with this book and find out more about the ladies involved, but just cannot stand the torturous, adjective-heavy writing. I just finished reading a book about the only all female concentration camp in Germany in WWII, and for all it's suffering and agonizing detail it didn't come

close to matching this for exaggerated descriptions. Just not my kind of writing, but it might not bother someone else less irritated by florid prose.

This book deserves 6 stars. Deborah Swiss has done a magnificent job of work covering not only the personal history of women transported to Australia during the latter part of the 1800s but also a wonderful profiling of those chosen personalities. We meet five of the most courageous, tenacious and gutsy women one is ever likely to find in fiction let alone in a factual biography. We follow them from children in the UK, marveling at their ability to survive in such poverty and want, and travel with them aboard doubtful crowded ships of exile to Van Diemens Land. We suffer with them in the Women's Factory in Hobart and rejoice when they fight back against the system that holds them liable for trivial offenses. And finally we celebrate with them when they ultimately gain their freedom, find partners, have families and move on throughout colonial Australia to help make our history. Very highly recommended.

Reading this book was an experience in itself. I was impressed by the research that Ms. Swiss did and the years it took her to compile it into a readable manuscript. The history she covered was heart rendering. These characters had grit! Based on the lives of women in this time period who were the first settlers of Australia and their horrendous lives, Ms. Swiss tells a graphic true story of their time. I enjoyed the book beginning to end and learned a lot about the history of the settling of Australia.

The research done is impeccable. I felt I was reading two or three books stuck together without an explanation. I enjoyed the stories, just didn't flow well.

This is an important story that should be told. It's unfortunate that this particular author is the one who tried to tell it or that she didn't have a conscientious editor. Deborah Swiss clearly did an excellent job of researching this shameful account of English justice and policy gone awry. Alas, her apparent goal was to let no fact, however minor and repetitive, go unwritten, and she crammed her story so full of extraneous names and details as to boggle the reader's mind. The reader is diverted, time and again, away from the focus characters, for no dramatic or informative reason, only to come up empty handed. The result was break the emotional connection with the three or four crucial women, thus losing interest in their outcome. I won't even go into the author's outrageous overuse of adjectives.

The life stories of the women convicts from the British Isles transported to Van Deimen's Land ( Tasmania) as punishment for minor crimes are fascinating, heartbreaking and inspiring. Tin tickets, swamped with numbers, were hung around the women's necks as they were loaded on the ships that would sail to Van Diemen's Land. Four women, Agnes McMillan, Janet Houston, Bridget Mulligan and Ludlow Tedder struggled, survived and finally flourished in this new country. The author, Deborah Swiss, came to our book group. She was wonderfully warm, witty, articulate and spellbinding as she described gathering research for the book and meeting the descendants of the women convicts in Australia. Definitely go to hear Deborah talk if she visits a book store or conference near you.

This book was recommended by a friend and once I started reading, I couldn't put it down. I passed it along to one friend and when she finishes reading it, I'll pass it along to another. The story was riveting and told in such a way that the reader feels present in the story. Excellent writing.

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