

This is a Story from 'A Few Forgotten Women'



This story was written, in January 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of girls from Leeds, Girls' Industrial School, Yorkshire.

Jane Elizabeth Stalker

Elizabeth Stalker was admitted to Shadwell Children's Centre on 9 November 1864. Her admission record shows she was 13 years old, born in Leeds. Her parents' names were Alexander and Elizabeth. Her father was described as a cripple, her mother sold 'small articles'. Elizabeth's offence was not a specific crime such as theft or assault, she was described as unmanageable, stealing, sleeping out and in the company of thieves. She was tried on 9 November 1864 by J N George and John Wilson Esq. Sentenced to one year and six months. Her time was up on 9 May 1866.

Her full name was Jane Elizabeth Stalker. She was born on 30 January 1851 and baptised at St Peters in Leeds on 31 August the same year. At the time the family were living on Accommodation Road in Leeds.ⁱ

On the 1851 census she appears as a 2 month old baby with her parents Alexander and Elizabeth. Their surname is misspelt as “Storker.” Her father Alexander’s occupation was a ‘labouring chemist’ born in around 1810 in Leeds. His mother Elizabeth was born in around 1829 in Alverthorpe in Yorkshire. They were living in Searles Yard on York Road in Leeds.ⁱⁱ Despite living as husband and wife and registering Jane’s birth as though they were married, Alexander and Elizabeth, whose maiden name was Speight, did not marry until 14 April 1852 at St Peters, Leeds. The marriage certificate shows that Alexander’s father, John was a surgeon. This was Alexander’s second marriage.ⁱⁱⁱ

On the 1861 census Jane Elizabeth and her family were still living in Searles Yard with her parents. Alexander was an ‘operative chemist.’ They had another daughter: Mary Ann born in around 1854. Alexander’s sister in law, 19 year old Sarah Ann Speight, a flax spinner was also present.^{iv}

In 1864 Jane was committed to serve her 18 months. Returning to the family home in 1866. Searles yard was one of the locations highlighted by the Medical Officers of the city as being a centre of disease “on account of the filthy state of the privies and ash-pits, and the want of a good current of air through them.”^v

On the 1871 census Jane Elizabeth was living at 17 Jenner Street in Leeds with her parents. Her father Alexander had changed jobs and was now a japanner and painter. This would most likely have been piece-work done in the home. Jane and her sister Mary Ann were domestic servants. There were two babies

present described as grandchildren: Mary Elizabeth and Louisa.^{vi} They were the children of Jane's sister, Mary Ann.^{vii}

On 10 April 1871 Jane Elizabeth married Jack Sayner, a smith, living on Jenner Street at St Stephens, Burmantofts.^{viii}

A 23 year old Elizabeth Senior was remanded for stealing a shawl from a child in Leeds and pawning it in February 1874.^{ix}

A daughter called Blanche Louisa was born on 25 January 1875 to Jane and John who were living at Ships Inn Yard in Leeds.^x

Jane Elizabeth Senior died on 21 January 1878 at the infirmary in Leeds. She was 27 years old. The death certificate shows she died of mitral disease of the heart.^{xi} She was buried at Beckett Street Cemetery in Leeds on 24 January.^{xii} Her daughter, Blanche disappears from the records. She does not appear to live with her father. There is a mention in a newspaper article of a Blanche Senior as a pauper child, boarded out in 1880.^{xiii} Investigation of Leeds Workhouse records might reveal more on this individual.

Jane's widower, John Saynor, remarried. He killed himself, by throwing himself in a canal on 4 September 1898.^{xiv} He was buried in Leeds General Cemetery.^{xv} Her father, Alexander Stalker died of an apoplexy on 4 May 1878. While there is no proof that he was a cripple as described in Jane's admission record it is clear that his life was on a downward trajectory. His marriage certificate to his first wife, Mary Ann Gelder, shows that he was a medical practitioner in 1829, a chemist at his second marriage, this also showed that his father had been a

surgeon. Then he ended his life as a japanner and painter. Had he been a doctor all his life, would Jane Elizabeth have had a more affluent and therefore possibly stable life? Even if that had been the case with her heart disease she probably would still have died young.

Nicola Hallam

Family History Diggers

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End notes

ⁱ Baptism records (PR) England. St Peters, Leeds, Yorkshire. 31 August 1851. STALKER, Jane Elizabeth. West Yorkshire Archive Service. Yorkshire Parish Records; New Ref No: RDP68/3A/16. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2023

ⁱⁱ Census records England. Leeds, Yorkshire. 30 March 1851. STOCKER, Jane Elizabeth. Class: HO107; Piece: 2320; Folio: 1050; Page: 14. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2023

ⁱⁱⁱ Marriage records (PR) England. St Peters, Leeds, Yorkshire. 14 April 1852. STALKER, Alexander and SPEIGHT, Elizabeth. West Yorkshire Archive Service. Yorkshire Parish Records; Reference Number: RDP68/5/38. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2023

^{iv} Census records England. Leeds, Yorkshire. 7 April 1861. STALKER, Jane. Class: Rg 9; Piece: 3384; Folio: 84; Page: 36. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2023

^v Leeds Times (1865) Local News. *Leeds Times*. 16 September. Page 3, col a. British Newspaper Archive. www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 31 January 2023

^{vi} Census records England. Leeds, Yorkshire. 2 April 1871. STALKER (transcribed by Ancestry as Wattles), Jane. Class: RG10; Piece: 4555; Folio: 170; Page: 19. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2023

^{vii} Baptism records England. St Peters, Leeds, Yorkshire. West Yorkshire Archive Service. Yorkshire Parish Records; New Reference Number: RDP68/3A/21. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2023

^{viii} Marriage records (PR) England. St Stephens, Burmantofts, Yorkshire. 10 April 1871. SAYNER, John and STALKER, Jane. West Yorkshire Archive Service; Yorkshire Parish Records; Reference Number: RDP16/30/10. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2023

^{ix} Leeds Times (1874) Under the Town Hall Clock. *Leeds Times*. 14 February. Page 5, col c. British Newspaper Archive. www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 31 January 2023

^x Births (CR) England. Leeds, Yorkshire. 25 January 1875. SAYNER, Blanche Louisa. Vol 9, Page 529. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 31 January 2023

^{xi} Deaths (CR) England. Leeds, Yorkshire. 21 January 1878. SENIOR, Jane Elizabeth. Vol 9b, Page 324. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 31 January 2023

^{xii} Burial registers. Beckett Street Cemetery Registers, Leeds, Yorkshire. 24 January 1878. SAYNOR, Jane Elizabeth. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 January 2023

^{xiii} Bradford Observer (1880) The Yorkshire Poor Law Conference. *Bradford Observer* 18 December. Page 7, col c. British Newspaper Archive. www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 31 January 2023

^{xiv} Leeds Times (1898) Local News *Leeds Times*. 10 September. Page 7, col e. British Newspaper Archive. www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 31 January 2023

^{xv} Leeds General Cemetery registers. 6 September 1898. SAYNOR, John. <https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/Leeds%20General%20Cemetery%20Burial%20Registers%20Index>: accessed 20 January 2023