

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in March 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who appear in the 1901 census for St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex and Farmfield Reformatory for Inebriate Women, Horley, Surrey.*

## **Louisa M'Cormack 's Story**

In the 1901 Census, Louisa was an inmate at the St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory in Ashford, Middlesex. There she was recorded as a widow born in 1856 in Portsea, Portsmouth, Hants with no occupation.<sup>1</sup>

While a promising start found a Louisa McCormick born in 1856 marrying Joseph McCormick in Portsea in 1872,<sup>2</sup> it soon became evident that two women could claim this backstory. Louisa McCormick, the spouse of Joseph, was born in Portsea in 1856 to Patrick McCormick and Mary Keogh and baptised in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup> By 1885, she was childless and an

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<sup>1</sup> 1901 England Census RG12 1171 Folio 13.

<sup>2</sup> Portsmouth History Centre, Hampshire, Portsmouth Marriages 1873-1874, CHU 3/1D/73.

<sup>3</sup> Portsmouth History Centre, Hampshire, Portsmouth Baptisms 1856-1876, CHU 71/1A/4. Also England & Wales Births 1837-2006 Vol. 2b Page 370.

inmate of the Portsmouth Workhouse.<sup>4</sup> Although no death can be found for her spouse Joseph McCormick who was fourteen years her senior, it is likely she was widowed.

A quick conclusion could have been drawn to identify her as Louisa MacCormack residing at the St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory in 1901. However, there was a marriage in 1888 at Lambeth, Parish of Kennington, Surrey between another widow Louisa McCormick born in 1856 and James Farrington.<sup>5</sup> The bride's father was Patrick McCormick and deceased.<sup>6</sup> An interesting observation is that her surname was corrected on the marriage certificate by the Vicar who changed the spelling from MacCormack to McCormick. Unfortunately, no record could be found indicating the birthplace of Louisa McCormick Farrington.<sup>7</sup>

With the existence of two Louisa McCormick/McCormacks, both widows born in 1856 who did not necessarily assume married names different to their maiden names<sup>8</sup> and one born in Portsea, Portsmouth and the other having a father Patrick, it was impossible to determine which could lay claim (if either) to the story of Louisa McCormick born to Patrick and Mary Keogh of Portsea.

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<sup>4</sup> Portsmouth History Centre, Hampshire, Portsmouth Workhouse Registers 1879-1885, BG/W2/1.

<sup>5</sup> London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1938, Lambeth. Saint Mark, Kennington: Kennington Park Road 1885-1890. Image 178. Ancestry.ca

<sup>6</sup> Patrick McCormick died in 1868. Portsmouth History Centre, Hampshire, Portsmouth Burials, G/PGC4/4.

<sup>7</sup> Louisa Farrington is traceable in her own right through the Workhouses of Greater London between 1892 to 1903. London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921.

<sup>8</sup> An attempt was made to determine Louisa's maiden name if not McCormick in marriage records by searching for grooms who were McCormicks/McCormacks marrying Louisa's of her birth year whether in Portsmouth or elsewhere. A similar search of the censuses was undertaken using Louisa's birth year and birthplace with no success.

However, we can briefly go forward with the story of Louisa McCormack of the Reformatory. In the 1891 Census, a widow Louisa McCormack born in 1856 in Portsmouth, Hants was residing as an inmate at the Infirmary of the St. George's Union Workhouse on Fulham Road, Chelsea. Her occupation was recorded as charwoman.<sup>9</sup> I believe she was Louisa M'Cormack who was residing at the St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory in 1901. In her middle years, Louisa was a frequent inmate at the Fulham Road Workhouse being admitted and discharged multiple times between 1888 and 1892. She provided similar particulars on each admittance.<sup>10</sup> Her earliest recorded admission was in September of 1888. Louisa reported being born in 1856 with her religion being Church of England. Her marital status was widow and her occupation was servant.<sup>11</sup> On one admission to the Workhouse in 1891, she reported herself as Roman Catholic.<sup>12</sup> Louisa's last record was a discharge from the Workhouse "To Service" in January of 1892.<sup>13</sup>

On July 26, 1893 in Aldershot, Hampshire, a Louisa McCormick gave birth to a daughter Amy Gertrude McCormick who was baptised at Aldershot Holy Trinity Anglican Church September 3, 1893. There was no father recorded in the Baptismal Register.<sup>14</sup> The child died in the fourth quarter of 1893 in the registration district of Woolwich, London.<sup>15</sup> Aldershot is about 50 kilometres southwest of London. If this was Louisa McCormack of the Reformatory, which

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<sup>9</sup> 1891 England Census RG 12 70 Folio 117.

<sup>10</sup> London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921.

<sup>11</sup> London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921, Fulham Road Workhouse Register, 1888, September 25, 1888.

<sup>12</sup> London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921, Fulham Road Workhouse Register, 1891, June 23, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764-1921, Fulham Road Workhouse Register, 1891-1892, January 7, 1891.

<sup>14</sup> Surrey History Centre, Hampshire Baptisms 1892-1896, ALDHT/1/3, page 37.

<sup>15</sup> England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915, Vol. 1D Pg. 877.

cannot be determined, she would have been thirty-seven years old at the birth of this child.

Louisa McCormack finally appears where this story began in the 1901 Census as an inmate in the St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory in Ashford, Middlesex.<sup>16</sup> No newspaper reports of her committal to the Reformatory were found.

There were no further records for Louisa past this point. No death or burial records were found.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 1901 England Census RG12 1171 Folio 13.

<sup>17</sup>There is a death of a Louisa McCormick in Greenwich, London in February of 1904. But, it was that of a child. UK, Burial and Cremation Index, 1576-2014, Deceased Online.