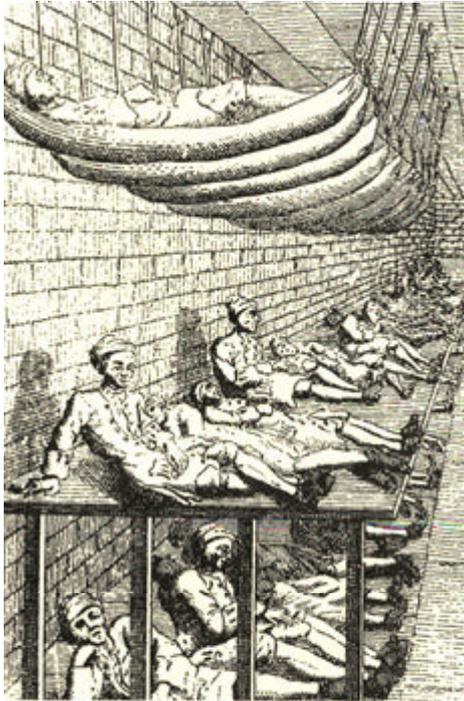


# The story of Henry and Susannah

The year is 1783. In a small village in England a father went out one evening with his young son to find food. Like many families in England they were very poor, and the father had no work. They decided to go to a farm and steal a rabbit or any other wild animal they could find. It was a dark night. The two moved quietly through the trees, but they weren't careful enough, and they were seen. They tried to run away and hide, but they were caught and taken to prison. When they appeared in court, Henry and his father had little hope, and the judge<sup>1</sup> made his decision quickly.

"This isn't the first time you have been here," said the judge. "But it will be the last. This time you will hang.



*A crowded prison in London*

Both of you." But Henry's mother cried out, "Please have mercy<sup>2</sup>, my Lord<sup>3</sup>. My son is only 14. He still has his whole life before him. He is too young to die. Please don't let him hang." The judge looked at the two prisoners: the father, miserable and poor like so many he had seen before, and the young boy, thin, dirty and hungry, his clothes like rags<sup>4</sup>. "The father



will hang," said the judge. "The boy will go to prison for 14 years." And so Henry was taken away to one of the worst prisons in England, Norwich Jail<sup>5</sup>.

In Norwich Jail the prisoners, men, women and children, were all together. It was dirty, crowded and dangerous. Only the fittest could survive. Henry stayed there for three years, and during this time he met and fell in love with a young girl called Susannah. She was in prison for stealing two silver<sup>6</sup> spoons from her mistress<sup>7</sup>. Susannah had wanted to run away from her cruel and miserable life as a serving girl, but she now found herself in a situation that was even worse than the one before. "I don't think I'll ever come out of here alive," she said, keeping close to Henry for protection<sup>8</sup>.

"You're lucky you're here," said an older prisoner. "Prisoners are usually sent to America. But now they've lost that country in the war, so there's nowhere they can send us." "Why send us anywhere?" asked Susannah. "Because the prisons are full. Half the nation is behind bars<sup>9</sup>. Food and money are only for the rich, my dearest. The poor can die in prison. But as I said, the prisons are full, so now they'll have to hang everybody." "You can't hang the whole population," said Henry angrily. "Just the poor," said the prisoner. "Just the poor."

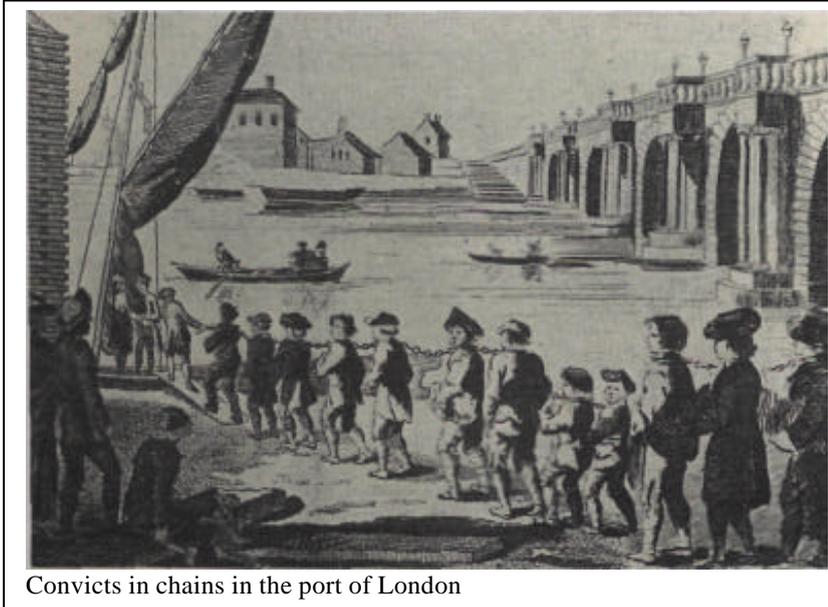
The same year that Henry and Susannah were sent to Norwich Jail, the United States of America officially became an independent country. In May 1787, the English decided to send the first group of prisoners to establish<sup>10</sup> a settlement at Botany Bay. Captain Arthur Phillip, who sailed with the First Fleet, had eleven ships, about 600 male passengers and 180 female passengers.

1 judge - Richter/in 2 mercy - Gnade 3 my Lord - Euer Ehren 4 rags - Lumpen

5 jail - Gefängnis 6 silver - silbern, Silber- 7 mistress - Herrin 8 protection - Schutz 9 bar - Gitter 10 establish - gründen

They had food for two years as well as pigs, chickens and sheep. One of the female passengers was Susannah. During those four years in prison Susannah and Henry had had a child. They had wanted to marry

kind man and, although shocked that a coach driver should run into his house with a baby in his arms, he listened to what had happened and decided that the baby should go with the mother and that Henry should



Convicts in chains in the port of London

be allowed to marry Susannah and go with them. And so Henry, Susannah and their baby son sailed on one of the first ships that left Britain for the new prison colony in faraway Australia. The journey took eight months, until they finally arrived at the place where James Cook had landed 18 years earlier, at Botany Bay. The captain did not want to walk through the sea from the boat to the coast, so Henry offered to carry him on his back. As he walked out of the sea onto the beach, Henry became the first prisoner to stand on the new colony. And two weeks later, on February 10th, Henry and Susannah finally got married in

while in prison, but it hadn't been possible. To make things worse, Susannah had had to leave Henry and go to Portsmouth. "Please, let me go with her," Henry begged<sup>1</sup>. "She and the child go alone," said the guard and pushed him away from her. For hours Susannah and two other women prisoners rode through the cold November weather towards the coast where the ships were waiting. When Susannah arrived at the harbour, the captain saw the child and refused to take it. "I have no orders to take babies," he shouted. "Take it away from her." "No, you can't," Susannah screamed. "He's mine. You can't take him away from me." "Who brought them here?" asked the captain. "Where's the driver?" "They have come from Norwich Jail," the driver said. "The baby was born there." "Well, you can ride back to Norwich Jail and take the baby with you. The woman stays here, but the baby goes back to prison."

the first British marriage ceremony ever held on the Australian continent.

The system of transportation<sup>4</sup> stopped in 1853, but up to that time thousands of women and men were put in ships and sent to the other side of the world. When



The coach<sup>2</sup> driver was horrified<sup>3</sup>. Feeling sorry for Susannah, he rode instead to London and carried the baby to the house of Lord Sydney, a very important man in the British government. Lord Sydney was a

their sentences<sup>5</sup> were over, Henry and Susannah Cable stayed in Australia as farmers. Henry was 82 when he died, Susannah died before him. But their children and grandchildren lived on. Today there are many Australian families like the Cables who can say that their ancestors first came to Australia as prisoners.

1 beg - (dringend) bitten, betteln 2 coach - Kutsche 3 horrified - entsetzt 4 transportation- Verschiffung 5 sentence – Strafe, Urteil