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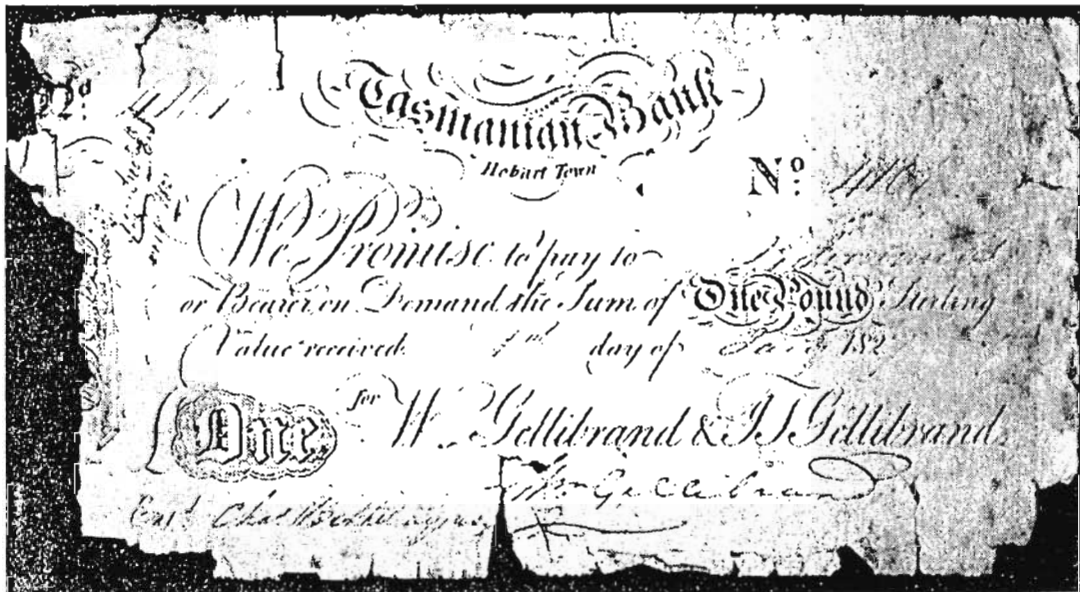
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# THE TASMANIAN BANK

by Michael P. Vort-Ronald



The Tasmanian Bank opened in Hobart, Tasmania between July 31 and August 4, 1826<sup>1</sup>. Banks of Issue in Australia<sup>2</sup> perpetuated an error in Foundations of the Australian Monetary System<sup>3</sup> in stating that the bank was formed by J.T. Gellibrand and his son. The bank was established by William Gellibrand and his son Joseph Tice Gellibrand. In 1827 the Tasmanian Bank made the first experiment in branch banking in Australia.<sup>4</sup> The bank is believed to have issued notes in both Spanish Dollars and Sterling.<sup>5</sup>

Only one issued bank note has ever appeared in auction.<sup>6</sup> The proprietors shown on that note were Wm. Gellibrand and J.T. Gellibrand. The note was dated 1st. January, 1827, No. 4101 for One Pound. It was made payable to I.G. Jennings, hand signed by Wm. Gellibrand and Entd. by Bethel Lyons.

Biographical and early Tasmanian references shed no light on the Tasmania Bank or the Gellibrand involvement other than in a biography of Joseph Tice Gellibrand which included the statement "... He established the

Tasmanian Bank ...". However, it is believed that the bank did not have an extensive business and closed early in 1829 "...when Gellibrand transferred his interest to whaling ..."<sup>7</sup> Descendants have since stated that they can find no evidence of involvement in whaling.

William and Joseph Tice Gellibrand arrived in Hobart, Tasmania on March 15, 1824.<sup>7</sup> Joseph Tice Gellibrand (1786-1837)<sup>10</sup> was the second son of William Gellibrand of London and Sophia Louisa, nee Hynde. He was appointed attorney-general of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1823 and was sworn on 7 May 1824.<sup>8</sup> He retained his right to practice as a barrister, a profession which he carried on with distinction in Hobart after his dismissal as attorney-general following his alienation from the Governor and other office bearers. He was also involved in shipping interests and the Port Phillip Association and the settling of Victoria. It was that side of his interests which ultimately led to his death.



Joseph Tice Gellibrand was killed by Aborigines<sup>11</sup> near Geelong whilst on an expedition to explore the hinterland of Port Phillip in 1837.<sup>8</sup> A portrait of Joseph Tice Gellibrand exists by an unknown artist, thought to be Benjamin Duterreau.

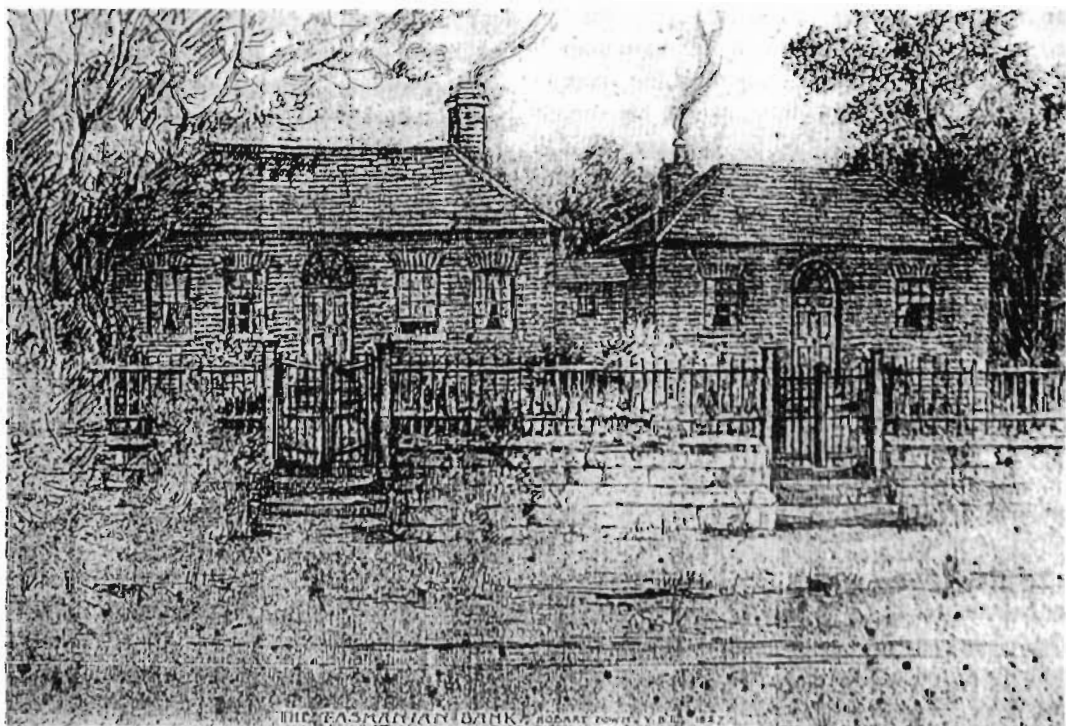
William Gellibrand had many business interests and ventures as well as being heavily involved with other free settlers in antagonising Governor Arthur. He became a Director of the Commercial Bank in 1833. William Gellibrand collapsed and died in that bank on September 27, 1840.<sup>9</sup> There is no known surviving portrait of William Gelli-

brand, but there is a good description of him in the book "The Hermit of Van Diemen's Land."

A surviving pencil drawing and a photograph of the Tasmanian Bank show two buildings. On the back of the photograph is written "The larger of the two cottages was the Tasmanian Bank, it had a stone circular safe let into the floor under old William's desk. The smaller cottage was Joseph Tice Gellibrand's legal office. The Athenaeum Club now stands on the site of this office. The larger Bank cottage became a boarding house called Ventnor and this building was still standing in 1927."

The Commercial Bank (of Tasmania) commenced business on June 29, 1829 in the former premises of the Tasmanian Bank.

In the book "Collection of Early Colonial Buildings" by William Hardy Wilson there is an illustration of the smaller cottage which has some additions. A lady in a poke bonnet has been added to the left hand side of the picture and a birdcage added on the right hand side of the front door.



Perhaps one of the reasons for very little information surviving about the Tasmanian Bank was that the Gellibrands treated the venture as just another of their many and varied interests which “seemed like a good idea at the time?”

### **Acknowledgments**

Jane D’Arcy for information and illustrations of J.T. Gellibrand and the premises of the Tasmanian Bank.

Noble Numismatics for illustration of banknote from auction catalogue, 1987.

### **REFERENCES:**

1. Colonial Times, August 4, 1826.
2. Banks of Issue in Australia Michael P. Vort-Ronald, 1982, p. 220.
3. Foundations of the Australian Monetary System 1788-1851, S.J. Butlin, Melbourne University Press, 1959, pp. 217 - 218.
4. Bank of New South Wales, A History - Volume One, 1817-1893, R.F. Holder, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1970, p. 98.
5. Colonial Times, 22 September and 13 October, 1826.
6. Spink Auction, Melbourne, July 1987, lot 461. Price realised recorded as \$2,200 against an estimate of \$1,500.
7. Australian Encyclopaedia, Grolier Society, 1964, p. 251.
8. Australian Dictionary of Biography, p.437.
9. Letters to author by Jane D’Arcy, descendant of Joseph Tice Gellibrand, 20 August, 7 September, 24 September 1991 and 15 December 1991.
10. Descendants believe year of birth to be 1792 as his elder brother was born in 1791. No baptismal certificate has been found.
11. Descendants believe that it is more likely that J.T. Gellibrand and his companion George Hesse got lost in the bush and died from heat exhaustion or lack of water.