

A Tale of Two Brothers

Samuel Peek and Richard Peek were brothers, their parents being Samuel Peek and Hannah Patey. There were 15 children in the family, with Samuel the older of the two, being born in 1807 and Richard in 1816. They were both born in Devon, West Alvington.¹

Samuel Peek lived in Gloucester in 1831 and married Caroline Webb (the eldest daughter of Joseph and Elizabeth Webb of Gloucester), on 25 December 1831.² He and his wife emigrated to Sydney in November 1835³, while Richard is documented as arriving in Sydney on the 18th October 1838 on the ship Hope from London.⁴

Samuel joined with another free settler, John Webb, in a Grocery and Tobacco business called S. Peek & Co., of 424 George Street and 295 Pitt Street, Sydney. This became one of the largest firms of importers and dealers in the city, according to "The Sydney Morning Herald".⁵

By 1838 Sam, with John Webb, had joined up with Sam's brother Richard and Edward Campbell in the firm of Peek and Campbell, a large and important grocery business. In 1839 the business was so prosperous that Sam Peek and John Webb were able to sell their share of it for £20,000 to the other partners.⁶

Richard and Samuel appear to have lost little time in their business pursuits, purchasing land together in October 1838. It is recorded in the Sydney Herald Saturday 17 April 1841, that 30,906 acres of land in the Middle Island of New Zealand or the island of Tavai Poenammo was purchased from the native Chief J. Towack which was sold to messrs, R. Peek, S. Peek and J. Webb. Mr R. Peek & S Peek being able to claim a third of the land each. The purchase cost 87 pound.

Also 64 000 acres was purchased to the north-west of the Bluff, from the native Chief J. Towack by Messrs R. Peek, S. Peek, J. Webb and J. Dyer for 40 pound with each of R. Peek and S. Peek being able to claim a fourth of the land.

Other business dealings of Samuel Peek are documented on another website.⁷ It describes Samuel Peek as a Castlereagh merchant who formed a

¹ http://www.peek-of-hazelwood.org.uk/_fpclass/Public%20Web%20Files/f_c.html#4

² http://www.peek-of-hazelwood.org.uk/_fpclass/Public%20Web%20Files/n_8.html

³ <http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections/items/82522/token-1-penny-four-line-tea-stores-new-south-wales-australia-1852>

⁴ <http://www.blaxland.com/ozships/events/3/218.htm>

⁵ http://www.peek-of-hazelwood.org.uk/_fpclass/Public%20Web%20Files/n_8.html

⁶ <http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections/items/82522/token-1-penny-four-line-tea-stores-new-south-wales-australia-1852>

⁷ <http://www.zentus.com/tomlist/captainlistertext.htm>

partnership with Captain John Hardman Lister and Francis Mitchell to outfit and re-fit ships. On 1 July 1839 the partnership bought the wreck of the *Lucretia*, which had caught alight in the harbour. In November, they jointly offered 5,200 pounds Sterling for Joseph Fotheringham's wharf and ship repairing yard ("patent slip for the purpose of examining and repairing ships of burthen") in Sussex Street, Darling Harbour. The price covered the land, the patent slip and the machinery. Only £1,040 was paid on completion and a mortgage was granted to Fotheringham for the balance. (These documents are available for consultation in the Mitchell Library.) Now the business world started to sink into a severe financial depression from which many would take years to recover. Lister and Peek dissolved their partnership in 1841. Desperate creditors launched bankruptcy proceedings

On the 30th August 1842 the *Australasian Chronicle* reports in an article a court case called *Peek vs Peek* where Samuel Peek tried to sue his brother Richard.

The article states that it was clear in the case that some years ago the plaintiff (Samuel Peek & Joseph Webb) and the defendant (Richard Peek & Edward Campbell) were in partnership in *Peek & Co.* which was subsequently dissolved and a new partnership formed between Richard Peek and Edward Campbell. Due to disputes some of the affairs had gone to arbitration. However as the arbitrators had no such power to decide such disputes an action was taken to recover the sum of 2400 pounds which it alleged had not been paid over by Richard Peek.

In this case a verdict was given to the defendant Richard Peek and it was stated in the article that "his Honor expressed his regret that two brothers should be upon such bad terms as to give so much employment to the lawyers."⁸

In an article in the *SMH* Thursday 8 December 1842 there is a section devoted to the insolvency of Samuel Peek and Co. Where Samuel Peek states "I ascribe my insolvency to our being robbed by Richard Peek of the firm of Peek and Campbell; I believe I have been robbed of 5000 pounds by him. "

In his insolvency case Samuel was accused of concealing a sale of sugar from Betts & Panton to Mr J Jones and there was the issue of concealment in a sale of coffee to Mr Peacock from Mr De Mets. The Chief Commissioner for the creditors urged that there was sufficient evidence to warrant in sending the case to jury. The Chief Commissioner said he would give his decision on Sat.

So Samuel Peek ascertained that he was robbed by his brother Richard and that was the reason for his insolvency. He lost his case with the arbitrators on this issue and had lost again in the court. Now during the insolvency it

⁸ *Australasian Chronicle* (Sydney, NSW : 1839-1843), Tuesday 30 August 1842, page 2
National Library of Australia <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31737008>

appeared he could end up in court again. There is no further mention of a following court case in the newspapers so we can assume that Samuel's business went bankrupt without further legal issue.

Samuel Peek experienced numerous financial problems in the 1840s Depression, as did many locally. By the early 1840s he had lost control and ownership of his interests in East Gosford. Samuel Peek being the original promoter of the township of East Gosford.⁹

Meanwhile it seems that Richard Peek and his company Peek & Campbell also experienced financial problems associated with the 1840 depression as they too became bankrupt in December 1843 when a creditors' petition and affidavit was filed against them.¹⁰ It appears that the receivers kept the business operating during some of this period. One year later Richard Peek applied for a certificate of discharge from insolvency on the 11th April 1844 and we assume was able to continue trading.¹¹ Below are some of Richard Peeks grocery, wine and spirit store advertisements. His store was at 452 George Street Sydney.

Queen's-place, January 31. 171

BRANDY.
THE undersigned has just received—
Two hundred cases of Champagn
Brandy, well worthy the attention of con
noisseurs.
1751 RICHARD PEEK,
452, George-street

WINE S.
JUST LANDED, and on Sale, at th
Stores of the undersigned—
A choice batch of Sherry, in hhds., quarter
casks, and octaves.
1750 RICHARD PEEK,
452, George-street

BOYDELL'S COLONIAL TOBACCO

The Sydney Morning Herald Saturday 8 February 1845

⁹ http://www.gosford.nsw.gov.au/library/local_history/heritage.html

¹⁰ The Australian (Sydney, NSW : 1824-1848), Tuesday 5 December 1843, page 3

¹¹ The Australian (Sydney, NSW : 1824-1848), Saturday 6 April 1844, page 3

ON SALE,
AT THE OLD ESTABLISHED STORE,
452, GEORGE-STREET, SYDNEY,

HYSON-SKIN, Congou, Souchong, Pekoe, Hyson and Gunpowder Teas, in chests, half chests, and boxes; Ration, Fine Table, White, and Loaf Sugars; Starch, Blue, Pickles, Sauces, and every article required by a family in the Grocery and Italian Trades; Brandy, Martell's best; Jamaica Rum; Gin, in cases and half-cases; Bottled Ale and Porter, best brands; Port and Sherry, in wood and bottle; Claret, Hock, Madeira, and Champagne.

The undersigned begs to inform gentlemen from the interior that at his Store may be found every article except Drapery and Ironmongery, that they may require on their establishments, and he pledges himself to charge the very lowest prices goods can honestly be sold at. Those gentlemen who do not intend visiting Sydney during the ensuing Wool season, would oblige by addressing their orders to 452, and they will be supplied at as low prices, and as much to their satisfaction, in every way as if they had visited the metropolis and personally selected the goods.

RICHARD PEEK,
 452, George-street,
 Four doors south of the Post Office,

The Moreton Bay Courier (Brisbane, Qld. : 1846-1861), Saturday 18 December 1847, page 3

TO LET,

THE SHOP adjoining the grocery, wine, and spirit store of Richard Peek, George-street. Apply to

R. PEEK,
 452, George-street.

9166

The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842-1954), Saturday 13 June 1846, page 4

Richard Peek's name does appear in a couple of court cases to do with the business dealings of his store. In one article he was the purchaser of champagne of inferior quality to that which he originally sampled at an auction. "But the champagne actually delivered was a very different article from the sample. In fact it was a colonial made wine of very inferior quality, and was said to be scarcely worth five shillings a dozen." This story is outlined in the Supreme Court case of Muriel vs Malcolm in the SMH Thursday 29th June 1854. In this case the court found in favour of the plaintiff and moneys were restored.

In another article Robert Graham a grocer in Surry Hills was charged by Richard Peek as obtaining goods under false pretences. Apparently the grocer failed to pay his debt and the information on which he gave Richard Peek by which he had obtained credit from him had been false. "Mr. Peek, however posed, on further cross-examination, that if the amount due him had been paid, he should not have instituted the present charge against the defendant." The case was dismissed according to the SMH Wednesday 17th January 1849.

Richard Peek married Lydia Weymss in Sydney on 13th September 1841. They had four children, Richard Peek (1843 – 1911), John Peek (1845 – 1886), Mary E W Peek (1848 –) and Hannah Peek (1852 – 1858). Hannah's funeral notice states that "On the 22nd instant, of scarlatina, at her father's residence, South Head Road, Hannah Sophia, only daughter of Mr. Richard Peek, passed away in her seventh year."¹²

Around 1857-1858 it appears that Richard Peek and family lived at Victoria Cottage, South Head Road, while in 1886, it appears that he lived at Brookvale in Merrylands as referred to in his second sons John Peek's death notice.¹³ Richard Peek passed away on 4th December 1888 at Granville NSW. It can be assumed that as Hannah is referred to as an only daughter that Mary Peek did not survive infancy either, although no record of her death can be found. It appears that Richard outlived all of his children except the eldest Richard Peek jnr. His wife Lydia passed away two years after him in 1890.

After recovering from insolvency, the other brother Samuel Peek in 1845 joined with John Webb to form S. Peek & Co. In 1852 they introduced Tea Stores tokens. Refer to Appendix A.

By 1855 Samuel Peek and Co. had ceased trading when Sam Peek transferred his interest entirely to many other projects, which included the building of a hotel in the Gosford area.¹⁴

Samuel Peek also lived at Gosford, N.S.W., a town some fifty miles north of Sydney, where he owned five hundred acres of what is now the best residential area in the district. He owned a steamer which plied between Gosford and Sydney. The promontory where Samuel Peek and his wife lived is now known as Peek's Point, and the town of Gosford has a Caroline Street and a Webb Street, both named after Samuel Peek's wife nee Caroline Webb.

Sometime before 1857 Samuel and Caroline Peek returned to London, as he is described in his will made 19 May 1857 as "now of 162 New Bond Street, Piccadilly in the county of Middlesex, Esq., and formerly of Sydney, N.S.W." Soon after making his will, however, he and his wife set out again for Sydney.¹⁵

Samuel Peek and his wife died in the ship wreck the Dunbar at Sydney heads on the 21st August 1857. Reports from the newspapers at the time state that a pillow case with the name S. Peek on it was found washed ashore as was luggage with the name Peek on it. Mr. and Mrs. S. Peek it was stated in an

¹² The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842-1954), Monday 24 May 1858, page 1

¹³ The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842-1954), Thursday 14 January 1886, page 1

¹⁴ <http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections/items/82522/token-1-penny-four-line-tea-stores-new-south-wales-australia-1852>

¹⁵ http://www.peek-of-hazelwood.org.uk/_fpclass/Public%20Web%20Files/n_8.html

article by the SMH on the 22nd August 1857 were well-known colonists, 'Mr. Peek having been for many years a large importer, and formerly a partner with Mr. Robert Porter.'

DUNBAR

[Other Disasters](#)

The clipper Dunbar was launched in 1853 & on the night of Thursday 20 August 1857, approached the heads of Sydney Harbour after a voyage of 81 days. Under the command of Captain Green, the Dunbar was on its second voyage to Sydney. Despite the treacherous weather conditions on the night, Captain Green and his crew attempted to enter Sydney Harbour that evening, rather than wait until morning. The Dunbar was driven into the reef at the foot of South Head and began to break up immediately. In the hours that followed, all but one of the passengers and crew perished. The survivor, Able Seaman James Johnson clung to a ledge on the cliff face until he was rescued on the morning of 22 August, some 36 hours after the Dunbar ran aground.



When news of the wreck reached Sydney the following day, it immediately captured the attention of the public. In the days following, the media provided extensive coverage of the search for survivors and victims, and daily chronicled the progress of the inquest. Residents were drawn to the scene for the morbid task of identifying friends, relatives and business associates. Still only a relatively small town, Sydney was staggered by the enormity and proximity of the tragedy. A mass funeral for those who died and who, in most cases, could not be identified was held on 24 September. The interments took place at St. Stephen's Cemetery, Camperdown where there is still a monument to the victims.

<http://marinewatchnsw.com/library/mdisasters.html#Dunbar>



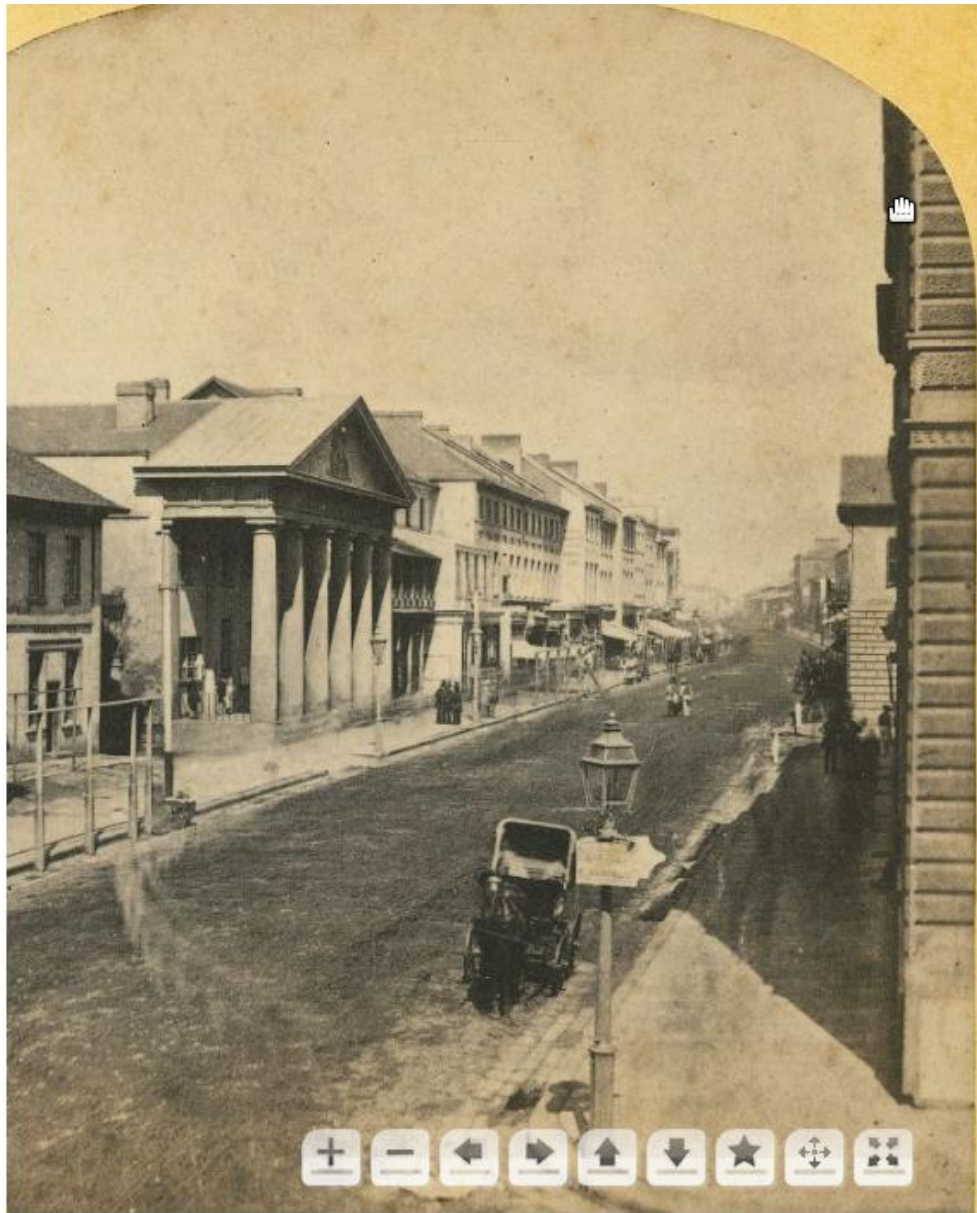
George Street Sydney, 1858 - 1860

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Post Office, George Street, Sydney, 1860 - 1863

Read more:

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=69029&search=george+street+sydney&images=&c=&s=#ixzz1Bkxszyls>

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i Statement of significance

This photograph of the old Post Office in George Street was published in one of the later sets of William Hetzer's stereoviews. The long exposure time could however suggest an earlier date. It is also possible that the photograph was taken by a different photographer, or was even possibly a deliberate ploy by Hetzer to emphasise its instantaneous nature.

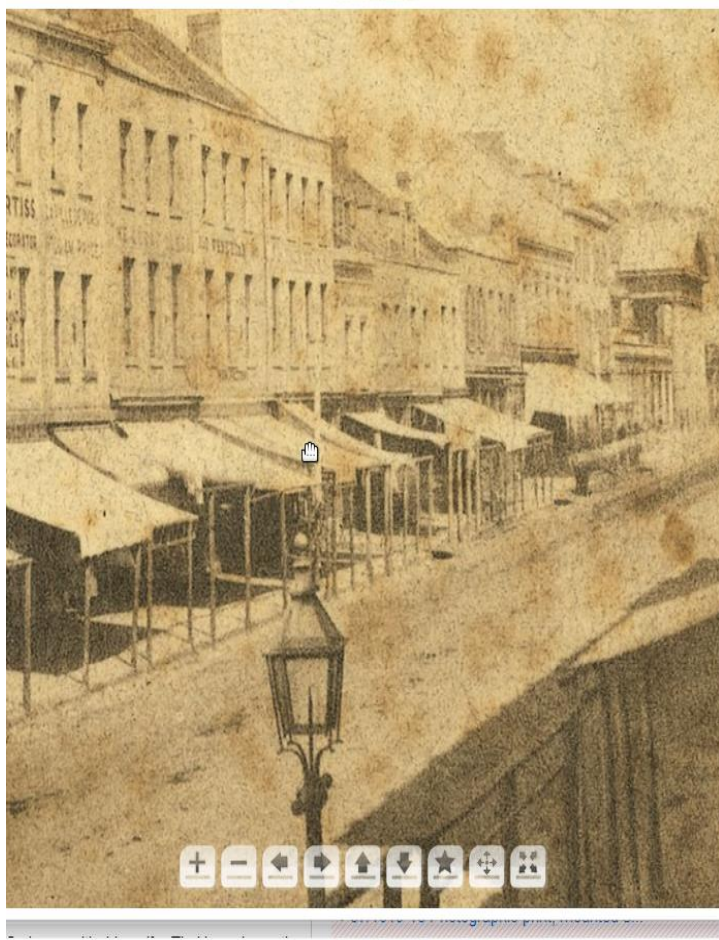
The photograph was taken early in the morning, as we can see awnings are still being erected along George Street. On the steps of the Post Office groups of people have gathered, presumably to get some shade from the sun. A few doors up from the Post Office, at 392 George St, was the premises of the most respected, and long lasting photographic establishments, in Australia, Freeman Brothers. Just below the Post Office (and on the left of this photograph) were the business premises of William Harbottle, Oilman, at 382 George St.

452 George St the premises of Richard Peek was four doors to the right of the post office.

Read more:

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=69029&search=george+street+sydney&images=&c=&s=#ixzz1BkxfkLcA>

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This photograph was published in one of the earlier sets of William Hetzer's stereoviews, and his blind stamp can be seen imprinted on the right-hand side of the mount. It is a view of the east side of George Street, just down from the Post Office. The shadows suggest the image was taken in the afternoon, and as we can see the awnings have all been erected except the two at the base of the picture. This may be due to Hetzer requesting them taken down as he took this shot from the window of this building.

Read more: <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=324387#ixzz1BBJi04gy>

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APPENDIX A.

Token - 1 Penny, 'Four Line', Tea Stores, New South Wales,
Australia, 1852  Reg. No: NU 18338



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Summary:

Copper One Penny Token, minted by J.C. Thornthwaite, Surry Hills, New South Wales. Issued by 'Four Line', Tea Stores, New South Wales, 1852. Sam Peek and his wife arrived in Sydney in November 1835. Sam joined with another free settler, John Webb, in a Grocery and Tobacco business. By 1838 Sam, with John Webb, had joined up with Sam's brother Richard and Edward Campbell in the firm of Peek and Campbell, a large and important grocery business. In 1839 the business was so prosperous that Sam Peek and John Webb were able to sell their share of it for £20,000 to the other partners. In 1845 Sam Peek joined with John Webb to form S. Peek & Co. In 1852 the Tea Stores tokens made their appearance, being the first recorded as manufactured locally. J. Thornthwaite, the die sinker, had these produced initially from blanks sawn laboriously from copper rods obtained through Sam's interest in the 'Burra Burra' copper mine in South Australia. A crude drop hammer arrangement, replaced by a crude press, were used to strike the blanks with indifferent results. By 1855 S. Peek and Co. had ceased trading when Sam Peek transferred his interest entirely to many other projects, which included the building of a hotel in the Gosford area.

Previous Collections: Reeves, T.; Brown (Miss) [W.A.]

Description:

A round copper token (34 mm diameter). The token design featuring the business and foundation date of the issuer: Tea Stores Steam Coffee Mill. It features a view of teas store and shop; on building at left background in four lines; TEA / STORE / STEAM / COFFEE MILL in exergue, ESTABLISHED 1835 / SYDNEY. On the reverse is Britannia seated facing right wearing Corinthial helmet and holding a trident in her left hand, shield with Union Jack resting behind. Above, BRITANNIA; in exergue, 1852 and, in small letters below shield, JCT.

Discipline: Numismatics

Dimensions: 34 mm (Diameter)

Weight: 20.647 g (Weight)

More information

Primary Classification: TRADE TOKENS

Secondary Classification: Australia - New South Wales

Tertiary Classification: working strikes

Series: Trade Tokens

DateEra: 1852 AD

Denomination: 1 Penny

Obverse Description: View of teas store and shop; on building at left background in four lines; TEA / STORE / STEAM / COFFEE MILL in exergue, ESTABLISHED 1835 / SYDNEY

Reverse Description: Britannia seated facing right wearing Corinthial helmet and holding a trident in her left hand, shield with Union Jack resting behind. Above, BRITANNIA; in exergue, 1852 and, in small letters below shield, JCT

Edge Description: Plain

Inscriptions: Obverse: TEA STORE STEAM COFFEE MILL
ESTABLISHED 1835 SYDNEY 424
Reverse: BRITANNIA 1852 JCT

Shape: Round

Material: Copper

Issued By: Tea Stores, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 1852

Mint: John Thornthwaite, Surry Hills, New South Wales, Australia, 1852

Previous Collection: T Reeves

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections/items/82522/token-1-penny-four-line-tea-stores-new-south-wales-australia-1852>

