

# George Badman

By Jane Smith

With a name like George Badman, the 18-year-old labourer from Walton, Somerset, could hardly be blamed if he happened to fall foul of the law at least once in his life. George went first to Ipswich, where in 1852 he married a young Australian-born girl named Margaret Eliza Flanagan. The following year, the couple moved to South Australia, presumably to reunite with George's brother, who had emigrated before him. They had a multitude of children, about half of whom died in infancy.

By 1866, George Percy Badman was a police constable in Glenelg. In 1874, he was appointed gaolkeeper in Palmerston, Northern Territory. He was promoted to Sergeant but his term as gaoler was brief. By the end of 1876 he was on leave from his post, and it seems that he never returned to the job. His career in the police force was over; George returned to South Australia and turned his hand to managing pubs instead.

By 1877, George was landlord of the Buck's Head Hotel in North Terrace. The following year saw him in court, charged with using insulting language with intent to provoke a breach of the peace. The incident took place in his own hotel. His accuser, who was a 'colored man', had taken offence at being called a 'd—nigger'.<sup>1</sup> The case was dismissed.

It was neither the first nor the last time that George Badman would appear in court. He seems to have been a prickly, litigious fellow who, when he was not being dragged before the magistrate for various offences, was pursuing justice in court for perceived wrongs against him. Perhaps he missed the excitement of his career in the police force.

In 1877 George had a man tried for conning £2 out of him with a valueless cheque. The offender was found guilty and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. In 1879, George was back in court, accusing a punter of using a forged cheque in his hotel. In 1881, George brought charges against yet another man for using a valueless cheque but the judge ruled that the transaction was a mistake rather than an act of dishonesty, and the charge was dismissed.

He reported thefts again and again: his trousers in 1877, a ladder in 1880.

George seems to have been a difficult master to his servants. More than once he brought charges against them. In 1878, he had Margaret Abbott fined £1 plus costs for getting drunk while in his service. In 1879 a servant charged him with assault, but he threw charges right back in the man's face for 'using language calculated to provoke a breach of the peace'.<sup>2</sup> Both charges were dismissed. In 1881, he accused a servant of absenting himself from service without leave or lawful excuse. Again, the charge was dismissed.

In 1879, George had his *own son*, Hubert Elias Badman, charged with disturbing the peace at the Buck's Head Hotel. The lad was himself frequently before the courts both as defendant and complainant, and was, according to his father, involved in 'too many swindles'.<sup>3</sup> George was before the courts again in 1883, for unlawfully supplying liquor during prohibited hours on a Sunday. The charges were withdrawn.

Even late in his life, George was fighting. In 1889, he bought a wine saloon that turned out to be less lucrative than he had hoped, so he sued the vendors for fraudulently representing it as profitable. The suit was unsuccessful.

It must have been an exhausting life. By the time George died in 1905, he had been before the courts on one side of the law or the other too many times to count.

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<sup>1</sup> (1878, March 30). *South Australian Advertiser*, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> (1879, June 13). *Evening Journal*, p.2

<sup>3</sup> (1877, June 30). *Adelaide Observer*, p.4