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Convictism - II (see also 2-045)

Lead: Beginning in 1787, Britain began transporting convicts from overflowing prisons 10,000 miles to Sydney Cove in eastern Australia. A modern state was built on convict labor.

Intro. : *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Crowded prisons was just one reason why Britain chose the Southern Pacific colony of New South Wales. After rejecting West Africa, Jamaica and Nova Scotia as impractical, the government settled

on Australia after considering the description of a visit to the island continent by Captain James Cook eighteen years before. The mild climate, good soil and well-protected harbors seemed ideal for permanent settlement. In addition, Australia had the benefit of providing Britain with a strategic outpost in a region where it had had little military presence.

The first convoy of convicts arrived in Botany Bay in May 1787 - eleven ships bearing 750 male and female criminals and their handlers, plus marines and administrative staff. The average age was 36. Most had committed petty crimes, theft, political offenses, military desertion and the like. Most were urban

laborers hailing from London, Birmingham, Manchester, Dublin and Liverpool.

The soil and water in the Bay proved inadequate and they moved to Sydney Cove at Port Jackson and began to prepare a permanent home. They were the first European settlers in Australia. In 1790 and 1791 a new fleet arrived bearing additional prisoners and 1793 the first free settlers came seeking land and opportunity in the new colony. By 1868, when the transport of prisoners to Australia ended, Britain had forcibly settled 170,000, adding to the rich diversity and egalitarian spirit of the modern nation of Australia. Next time: conditions of servitude.

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