

Selina Venus Brasch: why these forenames?

Selina Venus Brasch was the tenth child of Wolfe Brasch and Esther (*née* Silberberg): she was born on Wednesday, 9 December 1874 at 240 Swanston St, Melbourne, Victoria.¹ Her 9 siblings were all given essentially Hebrew forenames: Golda Figa, Hyman, Reuben David, Rebecca Deborah, Sarah, Abraham Jacob, Tamar, David Gerson, and Henry Moss, so why did she receive ones that were unusual and uncommon?

The reason for the choice of “Venus” turns out to be straightforward: on the day she was born there was a transit of the planet Venus across the face of the Sun, which received a lot of attention in the press.²

“Selina” is not quite so obvious, but also on the day of her birth there was a new Moon.³ If this was the reason for her name it is curious that the spelling isn’t “Selena”; but possibly this was ‘corrected’ by her usually using the forename “Lena”.

One must wonder if her parents had an interest in astronomy.

References and notes

I am indebted to Roger Neill for his article (<https://www.theatreheritage.org.au/on-stage-magazine/profiles/967-lena-brasch-actor-and-artists-model>) that inspired me to search for a reason for Lena’s names.

¹ Registration of birth in Victoria, Australia: Selina Venus BRASCH; registration number 4112/1875
This is corroborated by the birth notice in the *Australian Israelite* (Melbourne) of 11 December 1874, page 185a: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article261976587>

² See, for example, the article by Henry Chamberlaine Russell, the New South Wales Government Astronomer, in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 7 December 1874, page 7b.c: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page1446851>

³ See, for example, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 December 1874, page 6b, ASTRONOMICAL MEMORANDUM FOR DECEMBER 8, 1874: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page1446860>