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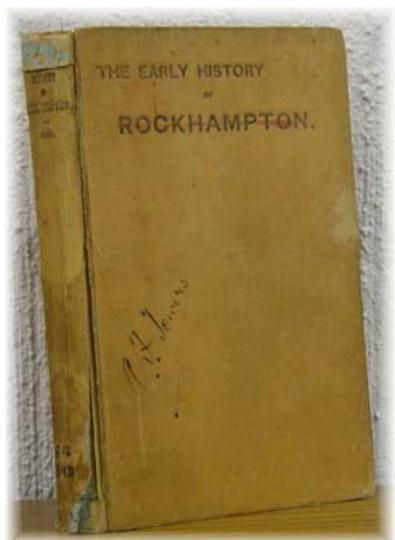
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The Early History of Rockhampton

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THE EARLY HISTORY

OF

ROCKHAMPTON,

DEALING CHIEFLY WITH EVENTS UP TILL
1870.

PREFACE.

Regret has been often expressed that there was no record of the early history of Rockhampton, which was fast slipping into oblivion. In the first few years of the town, when all the energies of the colonists were directed to clearing streets and roads, building wharves, developing inland trade, and the many other imperative requirements of a new town and port, chronicles were never thought of. It has been only in later days, when the older settlers are dropping off one by one, that the subject of early records has presented itself to those who would like to keep green the memories of that bustling time and give to their children some reliable information of what was accomplished when the town was young.

Probably the difficulty of gathering the experiences of the early settlers deterred some from the attempt. But nearly half a century has passed since the first building was erected in Rockhampton, and plainly if the task was to be undertaken at all there could be no further delay. Let a few more years run past and there would be little chance of gleaning reminiscences from those who had taken part in the founding of Rockhampton.

In all diffidence the work was undertaken by a resident of over forty years' standing, and the papers, which first appeared in "The Morning Bulletin" and "The Capricornian," are now presented to the public in a collected form. The kindly interest with which the articles were received when first published, encourages the writer to hope that they will still be appreciated. It is not claimed that they are complete, that would be impossible, but nearly every phase of the pioneering life of the people of the district has been touched on more or less.

Though in some instances the history of people and institutions has been brought up to date, the articles have been largely confined to the story of the town up till 1870. The difficulties encountered have been largely increased by the fact that in practically all the Government departments the records prior to 1870 have been either lost or destroyed. The files of the "Bulletin" fortunately have been available to the

writer, and it may be at once said that without these the work in a trustworthy form would have been impossible. With few exceptions the pioneers still living have readily supplied such information as they possessed, and these kindnesses are here gratefully acknowledged. When two or three accounts were received of the same episode they could not always be reconciled, which is by no means astonishing, for it is rarely that two versions are identical even when an incident is described at once. But efforts have been made to sift all conflicting statements so as to get as correct a narrative as possible. Errors which appeared when the articles were first published have since been pointed out and corrected, and it is believed that the chronicle may now be accepted as substantially accurate.

J.T.S.B.

Rockhampton, 1st November, 1904.

CONTENTS.

ARRIVAL OF THE ARCHERS.

*"It is always adventurers who do great things, not the
sovereigns of great empires."*

The first place settled in what is now Queensland, was Brisbane,
where a penal station was established in 1824. For more than twenty
years after this the extension of settlement was very slow; but in
1846, when the late Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone was Secretary of State
for the Colonies, an attempt was made to start a new colony at Glad-
stone to be called North Australia. There was no progress made, how-
ever, and the next Administration withdrew the settlers. Apparently, a
few remained or other people came, for there was a township there in
1855.

Rockhampton was founded by the Messrs. Archer, but, except in-
directly, they had little to do with building up the town. Still they
discovered the locality, and gave the place a name, and seeing they were
the pioneers, many people think it would have been fitting if the pros-
pective town had been called after that enterprising family. In a certain
sense it may be said that the discoverer of the district was Dr. Leich-
hardt, who left Sydney in 1844 and proceeded overland to Port Essington.
The expedition kept away from the coast, but crossed and named the
Dawson, Mackenzie, and Isaacs rivers. On Dr. Leichhardt's return from
Port Essington, a year or two later, he informed the Archers, who were
then settled in the Burnett district with their flocks and herds, of the
discoveries he had made in what is now the Central Division, and ex-
pressed the opinion that as the Dawson and the Mackenzie were flowing
in nearly opposite directions, but somewhat easterly, they would ulti-
mately meet and form one large river, which, as readers are aware,
is the fact.

A few years later—in 1853—Messrs. Charles and William Archer,
relying on Dr. Leichhardt's opinion as to the probable character of the
country, went on an exploring trip, accompanied by a blackboy. At that
time Rannes, occupied by the Messrs. Leith-Hay, was the most nor-
thern settlement. The explorers spent some little time there, where they
were joined by Mr. Spencer. Continuing north for fifteen or twenty
miles, they reached a high mountain, which they named Mount Spencer,
in honour of their companion. This mountain is about eight or ten
miles west of the present little township of Dundee. The view from
the summit was very extensive, and gave the travellers a good idea of
the position of the country. They decided to proceed more to the east
than they had been going, and followed up the present Dee River, which

SOME NOTABLE PIONEERS.

"It is instinct in our nature to follow the track pointed out by a few leaders."

THE OLDEST INHABITANT.

Mr. J. F. Danker is the oldest resident of the district. Mr. Danker was born on the 4th of June, 1827, and left Hamburg for Australia in the ship Aurora on the 10th of October, 1854. The vessel was bound to Brisbane, and was wrecked on Moreton Island on the 26th of February, 1855, through the master mistaking the passage into the Brisbane River. All hands got safely ashore, and remained on the island for about three weeks. In Brisbane, Mr. Danker, who could speak very little English at the time, signed some papers as he imagined for an engagement at Sydney, and left in a small steamer, as he thought for that port. The steamer, however, proceeded to Maryborough, and he subsequently found he had signed an agreement to work for two years as a shepherd for the Messrs. Archer Brothers, of Coonambula Station, on the Burnett River. Mr. Danker was one of the party, who, in charge of Mr. Charles Archer, left for what is now Gracemere. On the 10th of August, 1855, they pitched their camp on the southern side of Gracemere Lagoon. Mr. Danker remained for a time in the employment of the Messrs. Archer, and then he went to Gladstone, where he worked at his trade of cabinetmaker, sending goods to the new township of Rockhampton. In 1858, Mr. Danker came back to Rockhampton, and started business, and has remained here ever since. He married in 1863, and has a numerous grown-up family. He is now in his seventy-eighth year, and has not enjoyed the best of health lately, but he is still mentally capable, and retains a vivid recollection of many things in a long and eventful life. Mrs. Danker, a helpmate of forty years, is still alive.

MR. CHARLES HAYNES.

The oldest town resident of Rockhampton—that is the man who has lived here longest continuously—is Mr. Charles Haynes, of Brown-street, North Rockhampton, who is an authority on all matters appertaining to the Fitzroy River and Keppel Bay, having spent the greater portion of his life in studying its changes and mysteries. Mr. Haynes was born in Boston, Lincolnshire, in 1830, and after leaving school, took up a seafaring life. For nine years he was sailing in different ships from one portion of the world to another, principally in the East India Company's service. He first came to Australia in 1852, landing at Sydney. At this period the goldfields of Victoria were attracting people from all parts of

THE MOUNT MORGAN MINE.

" Gold is omnipotent ; it can make even the Moor white."

Though the world-famed gold mine known as Mount Morgan was not opened in the early days, it was a well-known locality in that period of the history of the district. The question has been asked scores of times, "How was it Mount Morgan was not discovered before ?" No answer can be given to the query, for the more it is thought of the more odd it becomes in view of subsequent events. It was not as though no gold had been found in the neighbourhood, for there were many places where good patches of gold had been discovered only a few miles away, and in some cases almost close to the mountain.

The first instance of gold having been found in the vicinity of Mount Morgan was in 1865. In that year gold was found somewhere in the neighbourhood of Razorback, and a party went out from Rockhampton to discover the spot. There were no roads in those times, and the place sought for was not found. Mr. Robert Sharples, storekeeper, was one of the party looking for the rush. They went over Razorback and down Dairy Creek to just where the corner of the Mount Morgan Company's freehold fence comes. There they found two men cradling washdirt, which had been obtained near at hand. They ascertained that they were a party of four, and two of their mates, one of whom was Mr. E. H. T. Plant, of Charters Towers, had gone off to the rush at Gavial Creek, Crocodile. One of the men cradling was Mr. George Jackson, the present Chairman of Committees of the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Sharples and his party went off to Gavial Creek, where they took up claims. This was in the concluding months of 1865, so it is thirty-nine years since gold was first got within a mile of the Mount Morgan mine.

For many years subsequently gold was found in the gullies for miles around, and a large number of men worked there, on and off, till the golden mountain itself was discovered in 1882.

Mr. W. Mackinlay, a man whose name has often been mentioned in connection with the early mining on the Dee watershed, was for many years the head stockman at Calliungal Station, on the Dee River, and lived at the heifer station, about fifteen miles below what is now Mount Morgan. Mackinlay evidently knew a good deal about mining, and was instrumental in opening one or two copper mines in that neighbourhood. After leaving the station service he worked for gold in some of the gullies in the neighbourhood, and is supposed to have done well. It was said of Mackinlay that he knew every stone on the station, but without going so far as that, he undoubtedly had a great knowledge of the country, and being of a curious and investigating turn of mind, knew a good deal about the mineral de-

THE ROCKHAMPTON BUSHRANGERS.

" Oh, how will crime engander crime ! throw guilt
Upon the soul, and, like a stone cast on
The troubled waters of a lake,
'Twill form in circles, round succeeding round,
Each wider than the first."

Bushranging never throve in Central Queensland.   A good many
miscreants have taken to the roads at one time and another, but their
careers were mostly cut short, ending in long terms of imprisonment.
In the early sixties bushranging was rampant in New South Wales, due
largely to the quantity of gold then being obtained on various fields ;
the sympathy shown by a certain class of small settlers ; and the rugged
mountainous character of the country, which enabled the robbers to suc-
cessfully evade the police sent after them. Occasionally there were reports
of depredations on the southern border of the colony from those who
had crossed over from New South Wales, but with one or two exceptions,
such as Macpherson, known as the " Wild Scotchman," these robbers did
not penetrate far into this state.   The authorities rather made a boast
in early times that it was not possible for bushranging to thrive in
Queensland, and results have proved that the boast was well founded.
As it happened, Rockhampton was one of the first places to put the
statement to the test.

Frank Gardiner was captured at Apis Creek early in 1864, and for
a time the wonderful exploits of other New South Wales outlaws were
a subject of frequent discussion.   Meanwhile the floods subsided and the
new gaol was put to its proper use.   Soon after Gardiner had been taken
away by the police, there was a great number of forged cheques in cir-
culation in Rockhampton. So much business was transacted by cheques
that so long as a well-known person's name was used, there was little
difficulty in passing cheques.   Numerous complaints were made by trades-
men in Rockhampton who had been victimised in this way, but the police
were unable to find the culprits.

About this time three men were knocking about the town, some-
times in company, who were noticed on account of their particularly
" flash " style.   These men frequented the hotels and billiard rooms, talk-
ing loudly, and spending their money as though they had a bank at
their backs.   One afternoon in April, 1864, one of those fellows, named
Peter Fagan, went to the shop of Mr. L. Sandel, clothier, at the corner
of Fitzroy and East-streets.   He bought some articles of clothing, and
presented a cheque purporting to be signed by Mr. Peter Macintosh, of
Rio Station.   There was no demur made to the cheque, and having re-

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