

2.2. Deserted... rescued by "uncle"...the Campbell's.

When I was about 9 years old, my father *William Webb*, decided to sell his land, and his brothers land at *Parramatta*. The *Governor, Captain John Hunter*, had given them land, because they were serving sailor's on his ship the *H.M. Sirius* that was shipwrecked at *Norfolk Island*.

My Father then enlisted on the *H.M. Reliance* as a sailor because it was going to leave *Sydney* and return to *England*. My mother Elizabeth was allowed to sail on the ship also because she was a freed convict and could return to *England* now that her sentence had expired. Another passenger on ship that was *Captained* by *Mr. Waterhouse*, was *Captain Mathew Flinders*. I only knew that name later, when it was part of my job to write up the names of ships and their Captains, and cargoes.

I found out a lot later that my father died on the voyage back to *England*. Maybe they were returning back to *England* to collect his back pay from the days he belonged to the *Sirius*. His younger brother had left the land sometime before and returned to *England* to get the money but he had not returned to the *Colony* or *Parramatta*.

The new owners of the property had several kids, and allowed me to stay on there. All I had to do was stay with the cookhouse servant, and help her.

One day my uncle *Captain William Reid* appeared with a horse pulling a small trap.

"Hello young *Adam*, I've come to take you to live with me at *Sydney Cove*. If you have anything that is yours, get them and put them in this sack, I want to talk to the owners of the property."

A little later he came out of the house.

"This is all I have Uncle." It was only a pair of trousers, 2 shirts and 1 coat.

"Good oh. Say cheerio to anyone you wish .We are off!"

With that I just waved at several kids, the cook, and the owner.

It turned out that my Uncle was not happy with my Dad and Mum leaving me on the farm. It was right next door to the farm that my uncle had been given after the *Sirius* was wrecked. He had sold it a lot earlier because he just wanted to get back to the sea life.

At *Sydney Town*, my uncle left the horse and cart, with instructions to a man to carry all our gear into his dwelling. After the small farm I had been used to *Sydney Town* was large, full of people and frightening.

Later my uncle had an important talk with me.

"*Adam* how old are you. Do you know?"

"Yessir, I think I was born in the year 1791, in the place called *Parramatta*."

"Aha, just after us shipwrecked sailors of the *Sirius* at *Norfolk Island*, returned to *Sydney Cove* under the command of *Captain John Hunter*."

"I didn't know that Uncle."

"Hmm, probably a lot you don't know. I think you are about nine years old. Now listen carefully."

This sounded important, so asked if I could have a piece of biscuit and a mug of water before he continued.

"I know that you have no relatives or protectors other than me in this colony. Now I am going to take some responsibility for you and get you looked whenever I am at sea."

"Thanks Uncle," I murmured.

"I have a friend *Mr. James Underwood*. He came out to *Sydney* as a convict when he was 20. The year you were born. Anyway he was apprenticed as a ship builder, when he finished his convict sentence. Now he is 29 years old and is the owner of a shipbuilding yard. Just a mile from here, at the mouth of the *Tank Stream*. He has agreed to take you into his boat building yard, while ever I am away. You will have to do small jobs in the yard, but you will get a feed every day and a place to sleep at night. How's that."

"Alright Uncle. But I'll miss you. Will I be able to make friends, I don't know anyone here. Do you think I will?"

"Of course my boy."

With that he showed me a rough bed, and pulled the blanket up to me.

I wanted to ask him why he had red hair like I did, while everybody else like my Father, had blackish brownie hair. Anyway I was tired and fell asleep before asking.

When my Uncle awoke me the next morning, I was still pretty tired. He told me it was exactly 10 miles from here to *Parramatta*. I must have fallen asleep several times during the journey.

"Well *Adam*, the privy is out the back, go and do what you have to do. Wash your hands in the bowl after. Don't drink the water in the bowl." I did what I had to do, then went inside the house.

"Here is a mug of tea for you and 2 oatmeal cakes, get them inside you. We may have to do some work today so I don't know when we will eat and drink again.

We left the house and started walking down a track. Quite a few wooden houses were on mixed in with brick houses either side of the track.

Slowly we were making our way down towards the blue water. My Uncle seemed well known, several people waved or called out to him. Everybody seemed to know who he was.

The track crossed over a small creek.

"Look over there *Adam*," he said waving his stick to the left.

I saw an enormous barn like building. Much bigger than anything I had ever seen. It was many times bigger than the barn on the land. It was at least twenty times as big. It looked like it was 2 levels high. Built out of bricks, with a shingle roof. It also had a wharf along the side, and a ship was tied up too the wharf.

"Does the *Government* own that building ?"

"No my boy. It is owned by *Mr. Robert Campbell*."

"Who is he?"

"One of the richest men in the colony. He used to live in *England*. Then went to join his brother in a business in *India*. Then he came out here to *Sydney Town*. He brings things here and sells them to the *Government* or other people. He also puts goods onto his ship and takes them to *India* or *China*."

"Where are those places Uncle." I asked.

"A long way from here, up in that direction," he replied waving his arm.

Anyway, we quickly came up to a stockade type fence, quite tall, going down to the waters edge, then running along to the right. We entered through a small gate.

I couldn't believe my eyes. There were people everywhere doing things, sawing, drilling, pouring tar over timber. A man was heating long iron pipes in a fire, another was bashing some iron with a big hammer. Lots of piles of timbers stacks everywhere, and now that I know how to count, some must have been at least twenty feet high.

A man came out from under a shed roof.

"Hi there *Willie!*" he called out.

"Hi there *Woody!*" replied my Uncle.

"Hmm, so this is the young lad who is going to stay with me and help me look after the place when you are away *Willie*. He has the same colour of hair as you do *Willie*."

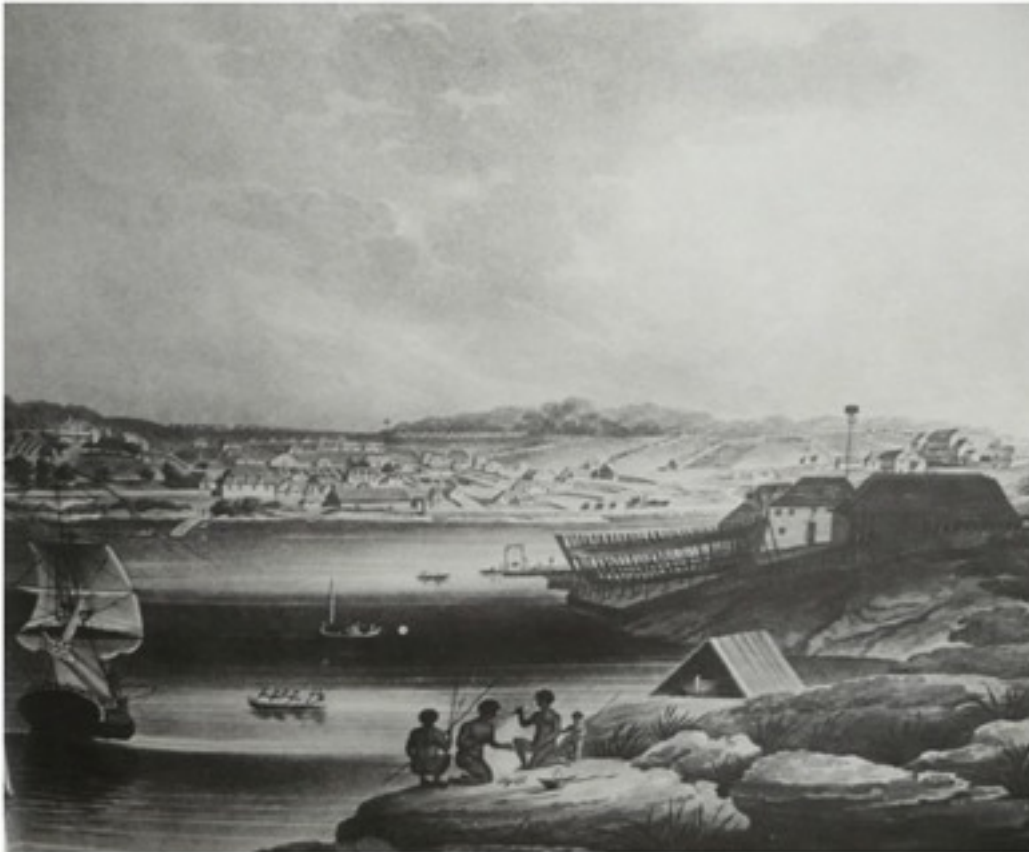
"Come over here *Mr. Watson*," he shouted out. "This is the man who runs the yard *Adam*."

"*Mr. Watson* this is young *Adam Webb*, you knew his father when he was on the *Sirius*. I want you look after him for me. He can do any job you think he is able to do, such as stoking fire, helping he cook, and other things. I don't want to see him get belted up, and I want you to make sure he has enough tucker every day. Show him where the privy is. He can sleep over there between that stack of timber we are maturing and the fence. Help him build a small cot. Got that?"

"Yessir *Mr. Underwood*. Hello *Willie* old mate, Hello young *Adam*, how goes it? Going sealing again soon *Willie?*"

"Hi! *Watty*. No I am probably going to take some supplies to *Norfolk Island* soon.

That was my introduction to *Mr. Underwood's* boat building yard.



Probably Underwood's Boat yard