

GOLD in GOVERNOR GIPPS LAND

3.1 ...Arrival Port Albert, and our shops at Maffra and Rosedale...Beef for Jericho diggers....Rushing Jericho..

...Our arrival at Port Albert, and our shops...

The year was 1862 and I was twelve. Dad, Mum myself and two younger sisters had emigrated from England to Port Melbourne in Victoria, Australia. Then sailed in a smaller Steamer to Port Albert in Gippsland Victoria.



The Marco Polo, Port Melbourne

We were promised that the ocean voyage would take approximately 90 days. They never said anything about the boredom and the living conditions aboard the boat. Still Dad said we had to go, so we had to make the best of it.

Life was pretty awful on the ship, very cramped conditions, everybody crushed in together, particularly when bad weather happened. Lots of sea sickness, horrible buckets for toilet use, horrible smells, and horrible rotten food and horrible water.

The ship was always listing from side to side, plunging up and down up and up and down it seemed like forever. The wind many times seemed to shriek through the rigging. It was freezing weather when we left England, then gradually as we sailed down the coast of Spain and Africa it get very hot so that everyone was sweating.

Then when we had reached the bottom of Africa and turned left for Australia, the huge waves just went on mile after mile. After it seemed forever, we saw land to our left and within 1 day we rounded the bottom of Australia and turned north and up the channel into Port Phillip Bay and then docked at Port Melbourne.

Because I was a biggish young bloke, I used to go on deck in all weathers, and park myself in the lee of the foredeck, so that if we shipped waves most would be washing just beyond me. Eventually I made myself a little useful for the crew, just by being there.

Anyway younger boys than me belonged to the crew and they had to pull on ropes or go aloft and tie down sails or go aloft and undo the lashings keeping the sails from taking the wind in bad weather, or if the wind was in the wrong direction.



Horrible conditions on the boat

So it was really good to arrive at the Port of Melbourne, to start our new life.

At Port Albert, Dad's brother George, who had left England 2 years before, had hired a 1 horse dray to take us and our belongings to our new home at Rosedale, where he had purchased a General Store for he and Dad to run to make a living.

That was an interesting trip over 3 days. Our wagon slowly walked through the small settlements and townships of Alberton and Yarrum, Nothing like the towns we had left behind in England.

The grass was very high and lots of small scrappy trees everywhere. Always we could see the approaching mountains, slowly getting bigger and bigger. We saw quite a few people on the track sometimes on their own, sometimes in small groups carrying rolls of clothing and canvass strapped to their backs, and also jangling billy cans and other items like axes and rope.

We were following the main cattle droving route from Port Albert, over the mountain range to the large flat area before the next big range of mountains that ran east to west.



On the way to our new home at Rosedale.

After about one and a half years we had accumulated enough money to open up another store at Maffra that Uncle George decided to run. He was good at nosing around, working things out and wheeling and dealing to get goods to sell.

....Beef for Jericho miners....

“Ian, stop that young steer trying to break left. Poke him on the neck with your stick.!”

“O.K. Dad,” I yelled out, and ran obliquely towards the offender.

“Mr. Bunting!, Dad yelled, “ quickly remove the pole in the gate opening so they can all go into the round yard, then close it when they are in!”

The yard was about 20 foot round and made up of vertical posts into the ground, with horizontal poles tied to them on land that Dad had leased not far from our Store at Rosedale, so that we could see them every day, and stop any one from pinching them.



Mustering our steers for sale.

Mr. Albert Buntine had purchased the 20 head of steers and said he was going to be the first to drive them up into the hills to feed the miners who had rushed Jericho.

“Why are you going to drive the young steers to Jericho Mr. Buntine,” I asked.

“Well boy! most of the miners and other people exist on damper, that’s a mixture of flour-water-and sugar, baked in a camp oven. They also eat mutton that’s pretty dry or beef jerky that’s really dried up. They also eat fruit, eggs, and anything else they can scrounge from others, or in the bush on the trees or rodents and birds. Tea is a staple with coffee.”

.”We get a lot more things to eat here.”

“You sure do. Horses aren’t eaten, because they are too valuable to use as riding or pack horses, and oxen aren’t killed because they can pull wagons or large logs or whatever.”

“What are you going to feed them on?”

“Well cattle only eat about half what a horse does, and they are better foragers in the bush. Sheep would find it impossible to find good food in the hills and gullies and they are quick moving and agile so I would have to herd them. I would never get them to stay together, and probably lose a lot. I only need my dog and a stockwhip, and its only a few days on the track.”

“When I get there, I will be able to sell just about all of the bodies of each steer. The meat obviously, the hides can be used for lots of things, and I can grind down the horn’s and hoof’s and sell the powder to the Chinese for medicinal purposes.”

He reckoned he was going to make a lot of money, selling the beef. Because all the miners wanted to do was find gold to make themselves rich and let other people supply them with food, clothes, boots and all other stores.

It appears this was happening all over the new state of Victoria, after gold was found in the Ballarat area. Beechworth, Myrtelford, Daylesford areas, and lots of places that I had not heard of. It also seemed that in hilly or mountainous areas it was possible to find the nuggets of gold in creek beds.



A mob on the move.

“Look Ian, if your Dad was more interested I reckon with the money I will make on this small amount of droving, I will be able to find another mob of steers. You could look after them for me and take a share in the profits. What do you reckon?”

“I’ll have a yarn with Dad Mr. Buntine.”

I did, I had a yarn with Dad. He reckoned that we were lucky with the small mob buying and selling them at the right price. Maybe Mr. Buntine would not be successful in the trek to Jericho and maybe he would’n get the price he wanted. Any way he said, shrugging his shoulders, it was not our usual line of business, and to forget about it.

...Rushing Jericho....

After we had lived at Rosedale for some time, Dad decided it was time to rush to the newly discovered gold area of Jericho in the Goulburn river district in the hills, and see if we could make more money.

Everybody seemed to be going to where gold appeared. Seamen were deserting their ships in Port’s, Banking people and clerks, Policemen, farmers and workmen just picked up some small belongings and headed for the Gold Fields to become rich



Rushing to wherever.....

Mum, plus a helper was to run the Rosedale Store, Uncle George was to run the Maffra Store, and Dad and I were to set up a Store at Jericho or Matlock.

It was rumored that about 4000 miners were in the area from Gaffney's Creek to Red Jacket Creek. It had also been rumored that 10 years ago in 1850, 16,000 people, about half the population of South Australia had left that State for the Victorian goldfields.

All the needed food and supplies, although Dad reckoned a good supply of boots, leggings, trousers and rain mac's would be good sellers.

Because the tracks from settlements to the gold areas were through very thickly wooded country, with hills and ridges, it was very difficult to even ride a horse, let alone have a carthorse drag a dray carrying things. Also stand over men or bullies would threaten people walking through the bush, and steal their supplies. So it was really better if people could travel in a bunch to protect one another and also help each over the difficult places, and to keep at bay robbers and thieves.

I was a bit concerned about all that, however Dad said it was alright, he had arranged for us to go with several other men. One of the men was Pietro Monaghetti a timber and shingle splitter. His son Giacomo Guiseppi Garibaldi Carboni Monaghetti was one of my mates and he had lived with his Dad for a while at Rosedale. His Dad worked as a timber splitter for a Mr. Giovanni Trinca at his Timber Mill, while he accumulated money, axes, other equipment and tools for his employment in the gold areas.

Strewth, it used to take Giaco about 2 minutes to say his name to anyone. But he was built as strong as an ox. At 16, he was short and squat, but with very broad shoulders and short hairy arms. By crikey, could he fight. Just as well he and I were always on the same side.

We had a great time on the journey, really living rough. But we all worked hard physically. There was always something to do. Get firewood, push a dray over rough ground, clear branches and small trees from the path.

Start small camp fires to boil the billy's for tea. Peel veggies and stir the big pots filled with lumps of meat and spuds, feed the horses and so on.



Overnight camping.

The best part was though seeing and hearing Giaco's Papa making him sing.

"How come you have so strong a voice, and sound like a girl?" I said to Giaco.

"Whatta you mean? Like my Papa I sing from the heart and voice. Eanno, the joy of singing songs from Opera's, makes me wanta practice a small scale every day."

At this stage Giaco sang in a rising higher voice, something that sounded like do-re-me-fa-so-latte-do.

"Eanno," he said. "I sing tenor, my Papa he sing basso. Thatsa why we sound different when we sing together, but we try to sing so that our voices seem to go together."

They did sound good singing together, and everyone liked listening to their songs.

Later on up the track when we were getting ready to sleep, I asked him, about his name, "Giacomo, how come you have got so big a name?"

"My Father fought for General Giuseppe Garibaldi who was leading a lot of volunteers to get Italian freedom from foreign Kings.

When General Garibaldi was in Rome he and his were fighting the French, but were being beaten so they had to leave Rome. His 5000 Red Shirts as his men were called, then had to fight the King of Austria's soldiers. Most of Garibaldi's men were killed. He and a few others escaped. One was called Raffaello Carboni a friend of my Papa."

I interrupted Giacomo, "At the small school I went to I heard that there was an Italian man called Raffaello Carboni who helped lead a lot of foreigners against the Government forces at Ballarat Gold fields, was that the same man?"

"Maybe! My Papa heard that one of the Red Shirt Freedom fighters Raffaello Carboni , who he knew in Italy, had been out to this country and at the Ballarat Goldfields. He was a leader of some of the men and with a man called Peter Lalor and others fought against the Government and its army when the Government wanted all miners to pay a tax. Anyway Papa thought this place called Australia might be a good place for me and my Family to grow up in."