

3.4...Summer Fires and Winter Snow....a Funeral for Angus McMillan...
Giacomo moves to Walhalla...I join Mr. Mackenzie McLeod's gold escort...

....Summer Fires and Winter Snow...

"Is that okay Mr. Ah Fat?" I asked my Boss

I had filled up 2 large tin buckets with the Lemonade mixture from the enormous mixing bowl. But before that I had measured the juice of 6 lemons, 6 cups of water and 1 cup of sugar 60 times into the mixing bowl and I had stirred it all for about an hour. I hated messing with the lemons. I had to peel the skin then put each lemon in a little press that pressed out the juice and left a small lump of pulp. The pulp was good to put on mosquito and other bites.

"Yes that's enough, Now put them in the barrow and go and stand in the street in front of Mr. Taylor's General Store and Post Office. When the Mail arrives you could get extra customers. Don't forget to take 6 cups to put the Lemonade into when you sell it, and don't give credit." Mr. Ah Fats orders were very exact even if his English was halting and hard to understand.

I HAD TO AVOID Mr. Henry Smallfield's Lemonade seller so that we did not compete.

I wish I had got the job to sell loaves of bread from a cart, but the Baker didn't think I would be able to handle hordes of loud hungry men.



Bread sales.

The Butchers helper had too many applicant's



One day I was nearly out of lemonade and a big hairy digger walked up to me with a small billy can.

“Fill er up!” he said loudly.

With that he held the billy up to his lips and finished it all.

“Buurpppp! By jingo that was good,” he said wiping his lips on a sleeve. Well I’m going into the Pub now for the last time, I’m leaving for the new rush to Walhalla tomorrow. And if that no good I’m going to go to Yackandandah.”

That was news to me that a digger was going to leave Jericho and head for another gold site. I thought there was enough gold here to last a long time. With places like Red Jacket, Blue Jacket, Matlock, Woods Point. around us. If there wasn’t enough easy gold, maybe we should not buy a Hotel here, but rush to another place.

Anyway we were reaching the height of summer and we were all expecting bush fires to burn in the bush and possibly the township and surrounding huts, tents, and humpies. Hopefully it would not be a summer like the one that started the famous fire in Melbourne where just about all of the population fled the fires.



The Great Melbourne Fire.

Mind you last winter parts of this area was snow bound for a week or so, nearly everyone darn near froze.



Snow everywhere.

I overheard Mr. Duncan talking to Dad the other day, when they were having a yarn and smoking their pipes. Mr. Duncan said that he estimated about 250 Chinese workers were working the river beds and gullies from B.B. Creek way down the Thomsen. They mined ground that was old and abandoned, but seemed to do okay but it was difficult for him as the Government Mining Surveyor to discover exactly how much gold had been found by them.

And of course there was occasional riots directed at the Chinese in particular. He also said that in his opinion, the easy gold was nearly finished here and perhaps the site called Walhalla or Omeo might offer a longer term situation.

I heard him also say that from the very early days of gold discoveries in Victoria, Chinese had arrived from Canton. Walking, getting lifts and of course when the big goldfields at Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and other sites were being worked they came in droves. Like lots of other nationalities from all over the world.



Chinese on the way to "some "goldfield

"There is not too many Chinese or foreigners here Mr. Duncan," I said "Well Ian that may be. But I can assure you that in the early Ballarat days about 1856, 1857 I have it on good authority that at least 22 ships of Chinese came from Hong Kong to Adelaide and Robe."

“Well why aren’t that many still around,” I asked.

“Hmm, that’s because a lot have returned home to China, whether richer or poorer no one knows. It was impossible to make all of them pay the gold license tax, and make them tell authorities what gold they had found. All we could see was them working, gambling and smoking opium. And of course more than any other nationality, quite a few times other diggers turned nasty towards them with fighting and riots.”

My Dad asked him, “how do you get your instructions for your work if you spend so much time in remote places?”

“Oh that’s pretty easy since the Telegraph system about 10 years ago in 1855. I make sure once a month I am in Beechworth or Woods Point so I telegraph my head office. It’s a wonderful invention. I also get general news as well.”

....a Funeral for Angus McMillan.....

“Look over there, I think that’s Mr. Mackenzie McLeod, the Gold Assayer, and with him is his friend the Chinese Merchant Mr. James Ah Fat, the older brother of Mr. Johnny Ah Fat..”

“They look to be dressed up Eano.”

“Hey look over there, its my photographer friend Mr. Jones. He has all his gear so he must be going to take photographs.

We were all present on this day at Sale Cemetery, to celebrate the life of Angus McMillan.

A notable absence was by Dr. Arbuckle, a Doctor from the Island of Skye, where Angus McMillan also came from, treated lots of men whenever he arrived at the Village. It seemed that he just rode to many different Goldfields out of curiosity and a willingness to invest money with adventurers.



Angus McMillan.

And what a life. He emigrated from The Isle of Skye, to N.S.W., where he became Station manager for Mr. Lachlan Macalister at Camden. After several expeditionary forays from the Limestone area of Monaro, he finally reached a spot at what is now Port Albert. He eventually made a station of his own at Bushy Park. Close to Boisdale Run at Ensay, a property owned by Macalister and the ubiquitous Dr. Arbuckle, who was a Doctor, adventurer, explorer and investor. All three came from the Isle of Skye.

For some time Mr. McMillan while he was carving out a Station he shot many Blacks, who intruded on his land, but in later life he became very helpful and protective towards the Blacks.

He later became a State of Victoria member of the Legislative Assembly. At 54 years old he was offered and accepted the position of Leading the Governments Alpine expedition to find gold deposits and open and cut tracks 8 feet wide suitable for Pack Horses, from Matlock to Dargo to Omeo, so that the miners could get supplies and the gold could be paid for and carried to the Victorian Treasury.



Jericho, Woods Point and Matlock above, Omeo centre right.

“You are who ??” I was being addressed by Mr. Mackenzie McLeod.

‘I’m Ian Sir, I worked on Mr. McMillan’s Packhorse tracks.’

By the time my Dad realized that we were in the wrong place at the wrong time at Jericho, it had been necessary for me to get other work, So after Mr. McMillan and his party found gold at Crooked River, most of his men left to search for gold he could not get engage many new hands, so I was picked to join the Expedition. They say that about 3000 people rushed the Crooked River area. The Expedition actually cut about 220 miles of track, before Mr. McMillan injured himself.

“Aha! I know your name, Mr. McMillan spoke quite nicely about you. It’s a pity he didn’t take you when he set our alone to the Moroka River, near Dargo where his horse dumped him and rolled on him.”

That's what happened. McMillan made his way towards Bairnsdale but he died at Iguana Creek at Gilleo's Hotel. And that's why we are all here, for the funeral.

....**Giacomo moves to Walhalla...**



Poverty Point Walhalla.

"Poverty Point. What a name!. Is that really where you are going Giacomo.?"

It appeared that this was the name of the cliff face overlooking the new gold rush area of Walhalla. And Walhalla was originally called Stringers Creek, after Ned Stringer the person who found the first gold there. Lot's of Italian men, some with families, occupied caves with wooden humpies, to carry out the work of tree felling, log splitting, shingle splitting and charcoal burning for the surrounding populations.



Timber cutting for the Township, and Mining at Walhalla.

"Why are you moving Giaco."

"My Papa says that this town Jericho, looks like it is dying, and the demand for lots of timber is drying up, and he knows that lots of Italian's are at Walhalla and making lots of money. A steam driven rock crusher has been installed so that great big rocks can be smashed and gold taken out. So we have to go."



Walhalla as it developed.

“ Mind you he still wants to join his fishing relatives at Kings creek Tyabb. When he saves enough money for us to go there and perhaps buy a boat, catch a lot of fish to sell at the Melbourne marketds.”



Kings Creek, Old Tyabb.

“When he saves enough money for us to go there, he will arrange for Mama and my sisters to come here to Australia to live. Maybe you could marry one of my sisters?”

“He says that a small village is already standing and the fish is taken by dray to Melbourne where it is sold.”



Old Tyabb village showing the Jetty to the right of the boat.

I'm going to miss Giaco, I don't suppose we will ever see each other again. But you never know.

...I join Mr. Mackenzie McLeod's' Gold Escort...

"Well young Ian, I am glad to see you!" Mr. McLeod said.

"I am pleased to be here Sir," I replied."But I don't my Dad is overly happy that I'm here. He thinks it is too dangerous."

At Mr. Angus McMillans's funeral, Mr. McLeod told me more of his duties as a gold assayer, and coordinator of a private gold escort company. He and his men rode around the countryside to various communities, and gathered enough gold nuggets or gold dust to make it worth while to protect it and deliver it to the Government Treasury, or Banks or private concerns in Melbourne.

He said that if I joined his company, I could start whenever I was ready because it was always difficult to find men for that dangerous work. But I would have to undergo a lot of training in scouting, shooting, riding and the other guard duties to protect ourselves and the gold.

"There are lots of villains around who find it easier to be bushrangers, robbers and murderers than do an honest days work. They find it easier to carry out robberies because the gold is spread allover Victoria and most has to be sold so that he diggers can make a living. There is no point in finding the gold and doing nothing with it."

" One infamous robbery was at Swifts Creek in 1859. You know, In the Doctors Flat, Ensay, area. With Gold from Omeo. However there appears to be a general lawlessness around so that small gangs of men just go out and take whatever they want. Because of the wilderness of the bush it is usually pretty hard for the Police to apprehend them."



Bushrangers!

“We accumulate enough gold to make a large delivery to the Treasury Building in Melbourne. From there it is either shipped elsewhere, to other Governments, Banks and others, for making it into gold sovereigns.”



Victorian Treasury Building

“Gold must be worth a lot Mr. MacLeod for all the effort ,” I said.

“Well,” he replied. “Gold is valued at the moment of 3 Pounds-6 shillings and ounce. The average digger must get about 3 to 4 ounces a week, as a minimum, or he goes broke or moves to another field.”

“Do you think we will be attacked by Bushrangers?” I asked.

“Well there is a few that roam between Mansfield, Bright, Beechworth, Seymour, Adelong, Kynton and Bairnsdale. Of course now that the Cobb and Co stage coach now runs regularly between Sale to Port Albert, the Police with the Mounted Native Police roam the area, so they have to be desperate to operate in that area. The reef at Walhalla now needs deep digging with big steam driven digging and rock crushing machines, and the Dargo Rush is over. So that has changed how the Bushrangers operate.”

Ever come in contact with or heard the names Harry Power, John Peisley, John Gilbert, or the Clarkes? No!, Lucky for you then.”

“Are they really bad?”

“We will shoot to kill them if we are attacked!”