

MACKAY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

HOW A NEW FRONTIER WAS OPENED

[By J. A. NILSSON]

(Read before the meeting of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, 25 March 1964, by Allan A. Morrison, M.A.)

The story of the growth of Mackay is, in many respects, not very different from the stories of other small towns strung along the tropical coastlands of northern Queensland. Its development occurred in the pre-scientific period of tropical settlement where townships straggled into being to meet the demands of the developing industries of surrounding districts. Survival and success depended on determination, a strong institution, and an ability to adjust to the new environment. An age of scientific progress separated developing Mackay from a project like Mary Kathleen, where parti-tinted buildings, air-conditioning, reticulated water, refrigeration and green gardens all mushroomed into existence within a year or so to home the thousand persons to be employed in the uranium industry.

A NEW FRONTIER

The settlement of Mackay and district represented a new frontier on European expansion into the Australian continent. European settlement had already penetrated beyond the Tropic of Capricorn into the Rockhampton district and inland to the immediate north, but the occupation of the Mackay River valley, as it was then known,¹ (and the Bowen district) were the first attempts at European settlement on the Australian tropical coastlands. At first, the tendency was to ignore the facts of latitude and climate and to regard the area as an extension of the southlands and as providing a further opportunity to reap the golden fleeces. The township of

1. The Pioneer River was first named the Mackay River, after the young Scotsman, John Mackay, who had led the expedition which discovered the present Pioneer River basin. In 1862 another stream, flowing into Rockingham Bay, was named the Mackay River in honour of one of the officers of the H.M.S. "Pioneer," then in those waters. The "Pioneer" then came south to John Mackay's river and Commodore Burnett, the commandant, suggested that the river be renamed the Pioneer after his ship, so that geographical mistakes could be avoided. After this, friends of Mackay, especially G. E. Dalrymple, proposed that Mackay be the name of the settlement and this suggestion was acted upon, despite the suggestion of the town surveyor, T. H. Fitzgerald, that it be named Alexandria. J. A. Nilsson: *History of Mackay, the Sugar Town 1862-1915* (unpublished thesis, U. of Q., 1963, p. 15).

Mackay was to be an entrepot for a thriving, prosperous pastoral hinterland.

Such a misconception could not continue. It was soon discovered that sheep had difficulty in adapting to the climate and in handling the long, coarse tropical grasses; they developed foot rot, "fluke" or "bottle," "greenmouth" and "yellow" diseases from the over-rich pastures; spear grass proved fatal once the sharp grass shafts had pierced the flanks of the sheep. Refrigeration was non-existent then and the sheep had to be sent as far south as Melbourne to be sold as mutton. Not specifically tropical factors combined with these others to seal the industry's fate. There were: trouble with the aborigines, or "blacks" as they were better known, the financial crisis of 1866 and poor market prices for stock. A local boiling-down works was the feeble finale to the early sheep industry's efforts in Mackay.

Cattle fared better in the district but within these years of the founding of Mackay, John Spiller had already planted the first cuttings of sugar cane and within another decade sugar was well on the way to supplanting the pastoral industry as the mainstay of the district and township. The growing demand for sugar in the early 1860's on the world markets, particularly those of Sydney, Melbourne and Great Britain, and the ease with which the new crop grew were two factors forming its early success—on which were to depend the survival of the district.

SUGAR BECOMES ESTABLISHED

By 1875 the sugar industry and the pattern of life to be long associated with it had been well established in the district and Mackay was on the way to becoming the "sugar-opolis" of the '80's.* Approximately 5,000 acres were under sugar and twenty mills were in operation,² twice the number operating only three years earlier.³ The plantation system of large sugar estates, each with its own mill, and supply of indentured coloured South Sea Island labour, its base on private capital and enterprise, had emerged with its leisurely way of existence.

Such lassitude was indeed frequently the attitude of some planters to the cultivation of sugar cane. According to Edward Shann, an early economic historian of Australia, sugar cultivation seemed to many "a form of agriculture

* A nineteenth century term coined for Mackay as centre of the rich northern sugar lands.

2. C. H. O'Brien: "The History of the Australian Sugar Industry," *The Australian Sugar Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 16 July 1951, p. 229.

3. *The Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, 27 April 1872.

exempt from such irksome tasks as the annual ploughing and sowing. Shoved into holes in the untilled surface of half-cleared land, the favourite 'Bourbon' variety grew large and succulent canes that seemed immune from disease. Small owners planted it up to their cottage walls and neglected weeding and 'tracking,' when new areas could be turned to profit so easily. Large mill-owning planters plunged into debt to extend their machinery. Anyone who had ever lived on a sugar plantation elsewhere was *ipso facto* an expert, to be put in charge of such construction."⁴ This lackadaisical approach was soon to be shattered by the outbreak of a disease which wreaked havoc with Bourbon.

RUST CAUSES MAJOR SET-BACK

This outbreak of rust proved a major set-back to the sugar industry of the whole Colony, but Mackay escaped more lightly than other areas, especially the ill-starred South. Only one prominent sugar pioneer, T. H. Fitzgerald, went bankrupt and this was due to an ill-timed move toward expansion coinciding with the outbreak of rust. Although some of the banks foreclosed, the continued support of southern capital, particularly that from Victoria, helped save the day as did the previous experience of some planters in other sugar colonies, such as Natal, the West Indies, the Mauritius and Java, and the luck that stools of such stray varieties as Black Java, rappoe and bamboo cane had been unwittingly introduced with the Bourbon⁵ and had escaped the ravages of the disease. From these stray varieties it was possible to gain new plants and so to preserve the industry.

Nonetheless the impact of this disease jolted the Mackay planters out of their former complacency and impressed upon them the need of adopting and maintaining more scientific methods in experimenting with different varieties and their reaction to Mackay's climate and soil. Although these early efforts in the battle against disease and environment meant that by the beginning of the next century Queensland sugar cane was permeated with every known kind of cane disease, they were part of the process that developed into the highly scientific and successful Queensland Government Bureau of Sugar Experiments of the present. Mackay planters played an active role in the process. They studied the latest techniques used elsewhere in the sugar industry—in cultivation, processing and transportation. Later a State Nursery was to

4. *Edward Shann: An Economic History of Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1930), p. 246.

5. Hugh McCready, formerly of the West Indies, set his Islanders to scour the stricken fields of Bourbon on the Te Kowai estate for stray varieties.

be established in Mackay, to be followed soon after by the establishment of a more specifically sugar-orientated institution, a Sugar Experiment Station, to import, propagate and test new varieties.

BOOM IN THE 1880's

After the rust outbreak in 1875 the sugar industry of Mackay proceeded to expand till it reached the peak years of the boom in the early 1880's. The Douglas *Land Act of 1876*, making available for agricultural purposes vast areas of land resumed from expired pastoral leases, paved the way for the boom. General confidence in the industry, however, did not really return until about 1880 when there was a temporary rise in the price of sugar, a reversal of the general trend of persistent decline in prices from the 1860's to 1900, due to competition of Continental bounty-fed beet sugar.* But for the moment, in the 1880's, as much as £37 a ton was offering for first white sugar. Land speculation became rampant, and even after the suspension of homestead selection and the reclassification of land at trebled prices, the boom continued unabated. Nine thousand acres of land resumed from the aborigine reserve at Baker's Creek and 7,500, acres thrown open for selection at Plane Creek were taken up almost immediately. There was great demand for land anywhere within 23 miles of Mackay; land that had been for years considered barely worth paying rent for as a pastoral selection was sold to southern speculators at £10 per acre.⁶ At the peak of the boom the number of mills in Mackay had grown to 30 and the population to 7,000.

INDUSTRY FACES NEW THREATS

By 1885 the boom was spent and the industry was facing new threats, challenging its survival. Such a situation was created by a combination of circumstances—the inevitability of some period of depression following on the inflated prices of the boom, the misfortune of bad seasons and a fall in world sugar prices. But the crucial factor was the growth of southern opposition to the continued use of coloured labour in the sugar industry. This opposition was not new to the industry, for it had begun with the introduction of coloured labour to the Colony. However, tradition was on the side of the planters. Wherever in the past Europeans had

* The unforeseen result of Napoleon's Continental blockade and aspirations to autarchy.

⁶ Cf. Honorable Harold Finch Hatton: *Advance Australia* (London, W. H. Allen and Co., 1885), p. 156.

settled or administered in the tropics, they had been accustomed to using the indigenous population to serve them and do the menial and manual labour. Parellelling the development of this practice was the evolution of the belief that Europeans were physically incapable of heavy work in tropical and equatorial conditions. The planters accepted this belief *a priori* as many of them either came from families of the old English gentry, accustomed to colonial administration, or (and) had had personal experience in other sugar colonies where coloured labour had been its mainstay. Their beliefs seemed to be confirmed by the failure in 1872 of a group of Scandinavian labourers to adjust to the arduous conditions of the Mackay sugar fields and by the inability of other non-Europeans to give a work performance equal to that of the Kanakas.*

“PLANTOCRATIC” WAY OF LIFE

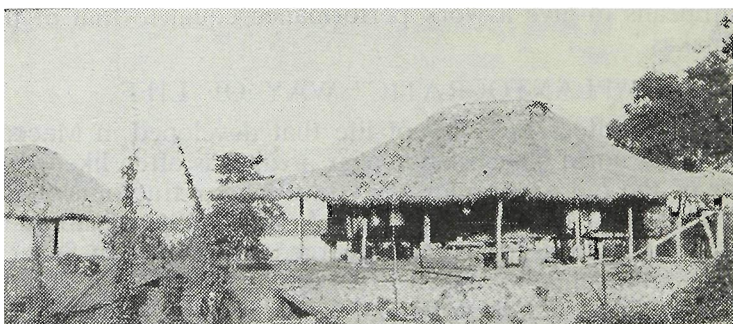
The “plantocratic” way of life that developed in Mackay and other north Queensland sugar areas was often likened to that of the old aristocracy and slave-labour tradition of the pre-Civil War Southern States of America. Strong northern parochial interests, which had merged with northern Separationist sentiments, brought southern fears of secession to birth against which the British humanitarian and anti-slavery tradition urged the cessation of this trade, so degrading and detrimental to humanity, in general. Attempts were early made to check abuses in “blackbirding,” the actual procuring of Islanders, when the Act of 1868 was passed. Although there was some relenting of opposition after the political complexion of the Homeland occurred about the same time as the passage of the Act, once the Liberals were entrenched in office in 1875 a concerted attack was launched on the black labour trade. The Liberals’ aim was to establish increasing control, reduction and final elimination of the use of black labour. By 1885 this pressure had become so great that, in combination with the other forces depressing the sugar industry, the confidence of sugar investors was faltering, as it seemed unlikely that the sugar industry could survive, once the Kanaka labour supply was withdrawn.

USE OF KANAKA LABOUR

Islanders had been used in the Mackay sugar industry almost from its very inception. They had first been brought to the district to serve the pastoral industry in 1867, four

* John Spiller had attempted unsuccessfully to use Chinese coolie labour and G. F. Bridgman’s efforts to utilize the local aborigines’ labour force was equally unsuccessful.

years after Captain Robert Towns introduced them to Queensland on his cotton plantation on the Logan River. A few Kanakas* were used in Mackay to grow arrowroot and cotton, two of the earlier agricultural activities of the district, but once sugar cultivation became more prevalent, this absorbed the main stream of Island labour. By the end of 1869 John Spiller had 33 Kanakas working on his plantation⁷ and over 50 were employed at Alexandria, the plantation of John Ewen Davidson and T. H. Fitzgerald.⁸ By 1877 Mackay was at the receiving end of most of the traffic in Islanders and retained this position for almost a decade afterwards. In 1880 there were 2,081 Islanders in the district.⁹



Kanaka hut and eating barracks on the bank of the Pioneer River. They were removed many years ago.

Block by courtesy H. Moore, Australian Sugar Producers' Association

As the major receiver of Islanders and the hub of the northern sugar industry, Mackay was the centre of all the abuse hurled at the plantation system. Despite the frequent charges of exploitation of slave labour, levelled against the Mackay planters, there was, in actual fact, little evidence of this once the Islanders had survived the rigours of the voyage out. While their mortality rate was higher than that for Queenslanders of European origin, this was not due to active maltreatment. The planters were too interested in maintaining the labour system to prejudice their cause by running the risk of time-expired Islanders spreading tales of mainland abuses. Frequently, however, maltreatment of the Islanders did result because of the planters' ignorance and even neglect, rather

* Islanders were frequently called Kanakas or Polynesians, the former name stemming from old French usage and the latter from a mistaken belief that the Islanders were Polynesians, whereas they were mostly Melanesians.

7. *The Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, 20 November 1869.

8. *Ibid.*, 11 September 1869.

9. *Queensland: Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. I, 1881, p. 1121.

than malevolence. Housing was an illustration of this, as some planters genuinely believed, or preferred to believe, that the crude grass humpies the Islanders built on their Island homes were equally suited to the definitely different climatic and occupational conditions of Mackay. Happily not all planters believed this. Unfortunate episodes, such as the New Guinea recruiting scandal, the high mortality rate at the Mackay Islanders' Hospital, and the Racecourse Kanaka incident¹⁰ only served to attract further Southern criticism and provide justification for it.

DECLINE OF OLD PLANTATION SYSTEM

Once the Federation movement was afoot, not even Griffith's volte face on black labour could turn the tide which was flowing against the old plantocratic way of life that Mackay had come to epitomise. The introduction of central mills, worked on a small farm-white labour basis, encouraged by Government money and immigration schemes, and the growing evidence that the old plantation system of one small mill to each large estate was inefficient and unscientific, contributed to the decline.

The township of Mackay developed with the changing circumstances of the district in which it was situated. Intended as an entrepot from the first, it lay on the southern bank of the Pioneer River, close to its mouth. Like most northern rivers on the eastern side of the Great Divide watershed, the Pioneer was short and, after its ungraded rugged upper course in the mountains, shallow and sluggish through a coastal basin of rich alluvial deposit. With its mouth choked by shifting sandbars and mangrove swamps, the Pioneer was scarcely suitable for navigation, yet the early history of Mackay was to include much about the constant struggle by the inhabitants to make the Pioneer navigable and the port of Mackay accessible by sea. Such a problem was to be a serious handicap to the development of Mackay and its district.

10. The New Guinea recruiting scandal occurred when natives were brought in to sugar areas from New Britain and New Ireland, both prohibited recruiting areas. Furthermore, none of the natives understood the nature of their engagements as was required by law. Although the planters were mainly ignorant of both these infringements, a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the situation.

The opening of the new Mackay Kanaka hospital coincided almost with the New Guinea scandal. It was opened three months before it was ready for occupation, so that the mortality rate took an alarming turn upwards.

December 23, 1883, the Mackay racecourse was the scene of a great Kanaka fight caused by drink and the notorious pugnacity of the Malaita "boys." The fight developed ugly proportions, the women and children present were cleared away and the planters suppressed the rioters by force. Clem Lack claims that many Kanakas were killed (*Journal of Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1959), but some old-timers of Mackay claim this is not so.

MACKAY BECOMES PORT OF ENTRY

When John Mackay first brought his stock to Greenmount in 1862 there was only an opening cut in the mangroves along the bank where steamers could land supplies and the odd passenger or two. By the end of the year a few tents and iron humpies had appeared among the scrub and mangroves to supply the early settlers with basic needs. About the same time Mackay was formally declared a port of entry and clearance, and soon after the streets were surveyed, but, except for the two main streets, were indistinguishable from the scrub and tall grasses. Slab humpies gradually replaced the tents, but it was still a primitive bush village. A dray track was the main route out of town; deep holes about a foot in depth, Mackay's "devil-devil" flats, pitted the ground. A gully, spanned by a bridge of three small logs, ran into the river through the main settlement. What progress that had been made was almost annihilated by a cyclone and flood in February 1864.

PROGRESS QUICKENS

Until the sugar industry was under way, Mackay changed very little in appearance. Then, despite the handicap of the bad port and very inadequate means of communication with the outside world, changes began to occur and the rate of progress to quicken. Government aid was always slow in first coming to a town so far removed from the politics of the south; but the spirit of initiative and enterprise that typified the Mackay planters began to take a hand in community efforts. A road trust was formed and a pass made through Spencer's Gap to break the isolation of mountain-hemmed Mackay; the normal communal projects of church and school building began. Mackay was one of the first towns to request its declaration as a municipality. When this occurred in 1869, there were 500 people and 130 dwellings in the village.¹¹ The corporation took the initiative in devising its own method of metalling Mackay streets with river slag. By 1875 the district Building Society, which had become defunct in the financial depression of the previous decade, had been reorganised to cope with the demand for buildings. The standard of building was much improved and by this time many of the old business houses of modern Mackay had been founded.¹² Industries, subsidiary to the sugar industry, had also been established — a local foundry to repair sugar

11. *The Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, 29 January 1870.

12. e.g. Marsh and Websters, Shepherds Anvil Stores Pty. Ltd., and F. Black Pty. Ltd.

machinery, a brick-making factory to supply the demand for bricks to build chimney stacks, and a workshop producing flat-bottomed river punts to satisfy the growing needs of the river traffic.

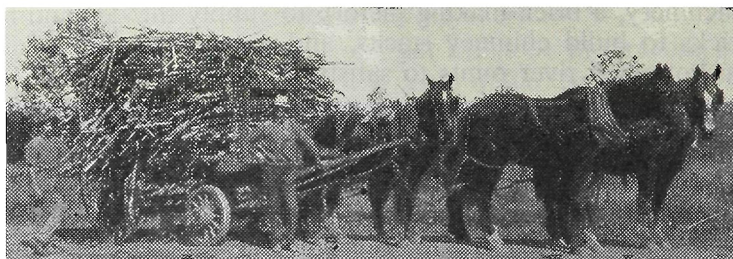
PUNTS AND LIGHTER TRAFFIC

Despite the inadequacies of the river as a port, it was surprisingly busy with the various craft connected with the sugar industry. Before a bridge connected the rich sugar lands of the north bank to the south, a ferry plied its way between both shores. Upstream, punts were used to ship the sugar from some of the mills close to the river and even to bring in machinery for new mills. Lower down the river, towards the sea, traffic was heavier, though it would have been more so had the river been more navigable. A channel filled with sandbanks and a tide that rose from ten to fifteen feet were the main difficulties and these became greater after a decade or so had passed and more silt had been deposited. Ships coming into the port waited under Round Top, one of the twin islands at the river mouth, for the tide, and if the arrival was at night for daylight too. For a long time there were no wharves in Mackay and passengers and cargo were landed off in boats or by planks from the steamer's side to the shore. Vessels were frequently moored to nearby trees.

With the growing trade in sugar and in Islanders, and the greater needs of the district, the need for improvements became glaringly obvious. By 1875 the sand spits had encroached to such an extent that the closure of the river channels to all but the smallest was anticipated; some vessels were loath to enter the harbour, so many had become stranded and damaged on sandbanks in the river bed. It was about this time that the lighterage system began—as a partial solution to the problem—of the larger ships' landing passengers on Flat Top Island, to be later lightered into town. During the sugar boom the Government began to give greater attention to Mackay's problem port, but from the various schemes, projects and river surveys little real improvement was effected. Mackay was to retain its harbour difficulties till Forgan Smith was in office in the new century and a site completely removed from the old Flat Top river mouth anchorage was chosen to build an artificial deep-sea port.

A COLOURFUL SUGAR PORT

Notwithstanding these handicaps, by the 1880's Port Mackay was becoming quite a colourful sugar port. Sugar was taken away by the schoonerful; migrant ships came quite frequently as well as the labour vessels, with newly-recruited



Nowadays there is scarcely a horse to be seen at work in the sugar industry. This old print, loaned by Mr. H. Moore, Australian Sugar Producers' Association, shows a horse team hauling cane to the Proserpine Mill.

or time-expired Islanders, coming to and from the port. It was quite common to see recruiting ships, unable to secure the full complement of "boys," returning with flag at half mast. Some of the steamers that dealt constantly with the port acquired their own reputations with the local residents. Such a one was the "Yaralla," about whom a local bard wrote:

*When the fun is fast and furious, or just going to begin
You may bet your bottom dollar the Yaralla's coming in;
But when the fun's all over, and there's no one left to shout,
You may bet your bottom dollar the Yaralla's going out.¹³*

Mackay was developing other distinctive characteristics. The busy sugar trade of the port provided a setting for the cosmopolitan composition of its inhabitants. The tanned Europeans of British, German and Scandinavian extraction contrasted with the dusky skin of the Islanders and the occasional parchment complexions of Chinese market gardeners and dark olive tones of Indian hawkers. The Islanders themselves were a picturesque asset for any port. Their pay day was one of excitement for the whole town for this was the day time-expired Islanders received their aggregate earnings for their three years' labour in the canefields. They thronged the streets to select excitedly the goods they would take home—tools, tobacco and clothing, being the most popular items. The only other events that vied with the Islanders' pay day were the annual local shows and the occasional visits of the "River Mob" to town. These were the up-country station owners and stockmen, led by the exuberant Charley and Edmund Rawson, whose rollicking nocturnal bottle-chorus parties always livened up the town.

ROLLICKING FRONTIER TOWN

Such a picture presents Mackay as a rollicking frontier

13. Quoted in *The Jubilee of Mackay* (Mackay: The Daily Mercury 1912), p. 21.

town of the tropics. The way of life that was evolving was certainly one that was peculiar to the northern sugar lands—but it was a compromise rather than adjustment to the tropical conditions. The planters' houses were built with wide verandas surrounding them, green gardens, tended by Island labour, and sweeping drives overhung with the colourful flowering trees that thrived in the sub-equatorial climate. Yet their way of life admitted little other concession to the climate; their mode of dress was still traditionally English with flannel underwear and women wearing the long form-fitting gowns of the last century. Men's coatlessness was the only noticeable mark of deference to the climate. A contemporary description of men's attire was "bosses, moleskin trousers and a blue Oxford shirt; working men wore moles and a crimson shirt. The only gentlemen with coats and hard-hitters were the card-sharpers who came from the south."¹⁴

Little was known about the long-term effects of the climate on the health of the European population. Periodically, especially in the early years of settlement, the inhabitants succumbed to epidemics of fever, particularly in the wet season when the infections of the poorly-drained low-lying areas of Mackay were most potent. In contradistinction to the prevailing theory that a tropical climate had an enervating and debilitating long-term effect on a populace of cool-temperate origins, there was little evidence to support such a view in the communal activities of the Mackay people. Despite the primitiveness of the early settlement, it displayed an early propensity to stimulating social, intellectual and even scientific activities.

VIGOROUS COMMUNITY LIFE

The presence of the planters, no doubt, had much to do with this. Many of them were younger sons of old-established British families.¹⁵ Well-educated and accustomed to playing a leading role in society, they soon dominated the community life of Mackay. A small weekly newspaper had begun in 1866—the *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*. Beginning as a pastoralists' paper, it was not long before it was an outspoken organ for the planters, championing their cause and their industry. The planters, strongly politically conscious, were active members of the Northern Separation Movement and supporters of continued Islander labour. Yet

14. Andrew McClanachan: "A New Chum's Experiences," *ibid.*

15. e.g. the two Finch Hatton brothers, one of whom became Earl of Winchelsea, J. E. Davidson, of Tulloch Castle, Ross, Scotland, the Rawsons, the Earl of Yarmouth, Sir J. B. Hawes, and the Dyson-Laceys.

their interests were not confined to their livelihood. They were active participants of the little School of Arts that soon came into being as the cultural centre of the community, many of them contributing their own talents. Among these was Mrs. Charles Armstrong, wife of a younger son of an Irish baronet, and future Australian prima donna. The planters' scientific interests were extended to their new surroundings. Expeditions, such as that led by Finch Hatton in the ascent of Mount Dalrymple in 1878, were part of their general spirit of enterprise and enquiry. John Ewen Davidson, first-class honours graduate of Oxford, set up his own observatory in Mackay, and aided by a fine six-inch equatorial telescope, found a new comet, "E," on 19 July 1889, the first discovered from Queensland.¹⁶ Other planters recorded notes of the flora and fauna of the district.

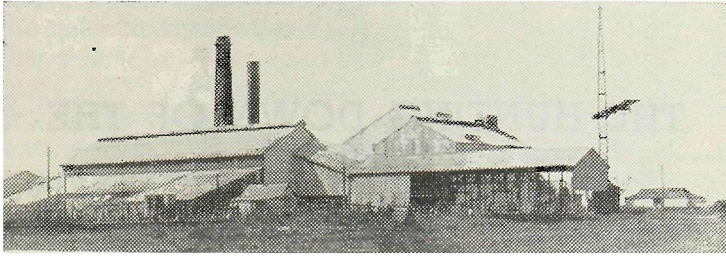
CHANGING WAY OF LIFE

While the planters were the economic backbone of the district, they were also its social and intellectual mainstay. Once their way of life began to decline, the character of the district began to change as well. In fact, this was one aspect of the general levelling movement which began at the turn of the century with the advent of the Labour movement, but it was also part of the process of natural selection whereby outmoded pre-scientific ways of life gave way to those more scientifically efficient and economic. Their vast estates were subdivided and taken over by European small farmers; European labour replaced South Sea Islander labour on the cane-fields, and the self-sufficient plantation system gave way to the central mill system, efficiently supplied by a network of tramways all over the district. The *laissez-faire* system of the past was fading in face of increasing governmental supervision and regimentation.

Nonetheless, the sugar planters had made their mark on the district. When the last days of the century lingered on the "plantocratic" way of life, Mackay seemed irretrievably bound to the sugar industry. In the preceding four decades, only sporadic attention had been given to industries other than sugar, and this occurred only when there was depression in the latter and townspeople feared the town's complete dependence on sugar. Only mining was ever considered as a possible alternative and the brief booms in copper and gold never gave sufficient reward to the hopes placed in them.¹⁷

16. H. Ling Roth: *The Discovery and Settlement of Port Mackay, Qld.* (England, F. King and Sons, 1908), p. 56.

17. For more on mining in Mackay, see J. A. Nilsson: *op. cit.*



This old picture of Racecourse Mill (circa. 1935) shows the old grab which was imported from Louisiana in 1911. The mast was 105ft. high and the grab had a radius of 60ft. It was dismantled in 1958 and replaced by an electrically operated crane on an overhead gantry.

Block by courtesy H. Moore, Australian Sugar Producers' Association.

BASTION OF NORTHERN SETTLEMENT

In the years that have elapsed since then, Mackay has remained a bastion of Northern European settlement. Though it received part of the influx of Southern Europeans that occurred in all northern sugar towns, the latter remained a minority and Mackay escaped the racial and cultural clashes that occurred when racial elements were more equally divided. Other aspects of old Mackay have remained. The Pioneer River, with its shifting, eroding course, is still a problem, but it is no longer so great as when it was the only means of egress from the town. The artificial deep-sea harbour and the bulk-loading terminal have been the means of overcoming the old obstacle to an efficient system of transporting the sugar from the district. While the boom of the 1880's marked the zenith of the sugar industry of the planters of Mackay, the boom of the 1960's marks the threshold of a new era with a favourable international climate and mechanisation replacing manual labour and acreage under sugar, sugar production and milling capacity reaching new levels.

| 18. Mill Peaks for the seven mills of Mackay (in tons of 94 net fibre sugar): | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| | 1963 | 1964 | Projected 1966 |
| Farleigh | 44,000 | 67,000 | 78,000 |
| Racecourse | 44,000 | 67,000 | 78,000 |
| Pleystowe | 45,000 | 68,000 | 79,000 |
| Marian | 42,000 | 62,000 | 72,000 |
| Cattle Creek | 25,000 | 34,500 | 40,000 |
| North Eton | 28,000 | 43,000 | 50,000 |
| Plane Creek | 44,000 | 64,500 | 75,000 |
| District Total | 272,000 | 406,000 | 472,000 |
| State Total | 1,235,600 | 1,689,000 | 2,128,000 |