

BEGINNINGS OF TOOWOOMBA

[By KEMPTON BEDWELL.]

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This is a brief history of men and women who were prepared to suffer much in order to develop a country that was a closed book. They had to face the terrors of hostile blacks, the depredations of dingoes, the ravages of floods and droughts, the dissemination of disease, the ever-present danger of fire, and they conquered. Their names liveth for ever. But the building of the country is not yet complete; they hand the torch to you.

Things are changing so fast that it has been necessary for the districts to collect and record, for future generations, the doings of the pioneers, to give the rising generation some idea how the old people got on in the early days.

The discovery of the Darling Downs was not brought about in a day, but extended over many years. Therefore I think that it should be followed through from Sydney Town. When a settlement was formed at Newcastle in 1804, it necessitated the feeding of the convicts in the new settlement and provisions had to be transported from the Hawkesbury Valley. Later it was found that at Morpeth almost perfect soil was available for growing crops. The rivers running into the Hunter abounded in timber, convenient for transportation by ship to Sydney. Cedar became extensively used. As the ground was cleared settlement started, bringing stock and grain seed. Gradually the country, what is now Maitland, became occupied. It was first called Willis Plains. The difficulty was to get stock through to the new area.

In 1818 Benjamin Singleton, together with four others, set out from Windsor to examine the country north of the Hawkesbury River. They contacted a native tribe of about two hundred. A native named Mawby had been in contact with white settlers and was of great assistance. He could understand English slightly and explained that there was a river to the east of their camp, about two days' journey. He said the water ran both ways. Singleton decided it must

run into the sea at Newcastle. After ten days they returned to Windsor. The following year the Senior Constable of Windsor, Mr. Howe, followed Singleton's tracks, eventually locating the Hunter River. After returning to Windsor for a better outfit and provisions, he again set out for a more northerly point and this time, on March 17, 1820, he came onto a splendid grassed plain which he named St. Patrick's Plain. For their services they were given grants of land. Benjamin Singleton was granted an area of 400 acres and another of 200 acres. Later a town was formed which received his name. He saw the area develop from wild bush to an important town before the date of his death, May 3, 1853. Property in this district was held by Colonel Henry Dumaresq of "St. Hilliers," near Muswellbrook, also the Glennie family, Edward Goswick Cory of "The Patterson" and Lieut. J. J. Cory, R.N., of "Coryvale." John Henry Cory occupied "Vacy," thereby connecting Toowomba with the Hunter Valley. The late Mr. G. G. Cory, whose name is perpetuated by our showgrounds grandstand, was a native of the Hunter Valley. My father was born at Patterson. Potter Macqueen held "Segenhoe," which was a very large holding and the homestead was beautiful. From "Segenhoe" in 1827 Allen Cunningham started out to discover country for colonial expansion, and in due course discovered the Darling Downs. In his travels he crossed the Liverpool Plains. Within ten years we find his tracks followed by Mr. Dangar, who secured land on Myall Creek, about eighty miles south of Boggabilla, in what is now the Inverell district. His manager was Mr. John Hobbs. It was on this property that a massacre of twenty-eight natives was committed. The police magistrate, Mr. Day, rode from Maitland and after an enquiry issued a warrant for the arrest of twelve ticket of leave men. They were tried in Sydney before Judge Sir William Burton in 1838 and seven were hanged. Governor Sir George Gipps then brought into being the Border Police Act to bring law and order to the backblocks and directed the settlers to regard the blacks as "subjects of the Queen."

In 1837 a land grant was approved of 5,500 estimated acres to James Howe. The area, to be known as "Merawah," ran from the junction of the Severn

and McIntyre Rivers. The property was later sold to Mr. Dines, then to R. B. Evans. Later part was sold to W. H. Mace and Walter Gunn secured the area on the Queensland side of the river. Mr. Mace then sold to J. H. Doyle, a descendant of the original holder. At about the same time, 1837, Dight secured "Boonall" in the McIntyre area. George Dight married Elizabeth Howe. John Dight married Emma Howe and the other two Howe daughters, Frances and Kate, were married to James and Andrew Doyle. I particularly mention this case to show there was a track in 1840 to the McIntyre from the Liverpool Plains where Patrick Leslie had a property at Collori, just south of the Liverpool Plains. Forbes also had a property at Werris Creek before coming to Clifton.

Patrick Leslie, accompanied by Peter Murphy, had previously journeyed to the Downs from New England. Leslie's tracks were then followed by Sibley and King to Clifton, Hodgson and Elliot to Eton Vale, Campbell to Westbrook, Russell to Cecil Plains, and Henry Hughes and Fred Isaac went to Gowrie.

The foregoing gives us the foundation and the necessity of Drayton traders to supply the wants of the squatters, selectors, and carriers. The carriers could not obtain sufficient water at Drayton, so they mainly camped at the junction of the two swamps, a few miles north of Drayton.

Fifty years ago the pioneers would sit and talk for hours on the early development of Toowoomba and explain how it progressed from a swamp to a village, then it became a town. Now we have our beautiful city.

They recall Sir R. G. W. Herbert, the first Premier of Queensland, on October 16, 1861, declaring the School of Arts duly opened on the corner of James and Neil Streets, on a block of land donated by Arthur Hodgson of Eton Vale. (He later became Sir Arthur.)

They watched Mr. Fred Stein and his men; many were new arrivals who volunteered to help in the construction which, when completed, was quite an elaborate building and the cost was £435.

In 1876 the people desired a new School of Arts, so a block of land in Ruthven Street was secured on which was built, at a cost of £2,912, an imposing struc-

ture. The foundation stone was laid by Hon. A. Macalister.

When the new School of Arts was built the old building became the council chambers. At one of their meetings it was decided to convert the building into a Town Hall. Mr. R. Godsall's tender of £3,103 was accepted and the hall was a popular building for concerts and dances from 1880.

When the Ruthven Street School of Arts was destroyed by fire on June 21, 1898, the town had moved away from James Street. It was decided then to build a new Town Hall surmounted by a clock tower, which would house the School of Arts, Council Chambers and offices, with a large hall and accommodation for a Technical College. On November 22, 1899, the tender of Mr. A. Mayes was accepted to erect the present Town Hall at a cost of £6,440. On February 20, 1900, the foundation stone was laid by Sir Samuel W. Griffith. The clock was imported from London, at a cost of £300. The total cost of the building and furniture, when completed, was between £10,000 and £11,000.

To enable the council to dispose of the property on the corner of James and Neil Streets to the Education Department, a special Act of Parliament was passed. The South State School now occupies the site.

On the opposite side of James Street stood Burge's Town Hall Hotel; the building next to it was the Swamp's first post and telegraph office. Its walls were of slabs about eighteen inches wide and two inches thick, the cracks were covered with strips of tin or zinc, the walls were covered with paper pasted on, and hessian comprised the ceiling. The police station was located in Russell Street, so the powers that be decided to remove the post office so as to give the police protection against bushrangers. To accomplish this, the Government built a new post office on the corner of Ruthven and Russell Streets. This was in 1865. Ten years later the residents of James Street held an indignation meeting and advocated that the inconvenience was unnecessary. The only land available was a block of two acres on the corner of Margaret and Neil Streets. This was secured from Hon. J. Thornlow Smith for £750. (It had changed hands several times since George Thorne purchased it at the first land sale in

1853 for £8.) John Gargett got the contract to erect it for £5,000, also a further contract of £5,000 for the court house. John Hill's father was the foreman and Harry Andrews finished his carpenter's apprenticeship on this job. Hon. W. H. Groom, M.L.A., and E. W. Pechey, M.L.A., backed the people up in securing this grand improvement. The Government then donated a further £250 for the clock.

Our first benevolent hospital was a small cottage in Russell Street, about opposite the present railway station. Dr. Armstrong cared for the patients free of charge and the squatters paid for the upkeep.

Later there was erected a men's hospital next to the Roman Catholic Church, and adjacent to it was a women's hospital. They were supported by the people and controlled by a benevolent committee. Joe Smith was the dispenser and Mr. Wonderley had a chemist shop first round the corner in Ruthven Street, near James Street. This building was destroyed by fire on Christmas Eve in 1867 without loss of life. To enable the ministers to be accommodated the hotel on the corner of Ruthven and James Streets was leased for eighteen months whilst a new hospital could be built.

As the school was close to the hospital the parents requested it to be erected on the outskirts of the town instead of rebuilding a hospital in front of what was then the Boys' South School. The Government voted £1,500 for the building and £200 for the contents. Then in 1877 it was decided to build a fever ward. The objection by the parents and public won the day, and a sight of 30 acres was purchased in West Street from Mr. Wilcox for £1,000. The land had originally been purchased by Mr. Shuttlewood in 1850 as an agricultural Drayton suburban block for £200 an acre. By the way, this Mr. Shuttlewood was one of the first men to ever come to the swamp to cut grass for Mr. Horton, of the Butt's Head Inn at Drayton, and he found Mr. J. Dent camped on the swamp, working for Westbrook Station. Up to that date, 1844, only natives lived in the area now Toowoomba. The Government allowed the committee £2,000 for the old hospital and the area is now the Girls' South School and £6,000 was placed on the estimates for the erection of a new hospital in West Street. Many extensions have since been

made so that the sick and maimed can receive every care and attention.

So the development of Toowoomba may be compared to the giant oak which started from a very small seed.

In the words of Cicero, "Not to know what happened before you were born is to always remain a child." For what is man's life if it is not linked with the life of the earlier generations by memory of the past.

January 3, 1861: First municipal election was held.

March 25, 1864: Lady Bowen turned first sod at Ipswich for Toowoomba railway line.

April 30, 1867: Railway opened by Hon. A. Watts. Governor could not get through flood waters.

The first train arrived on April 12 in six hours.

April 16, 1868: The Dalby line was opened.

The population of Toowoomba was 3,000.

1876: The population of Toowoomba was 9,500.

1875: Toowoomba Grammar School foundation stone was laid by Judge Lilley, cost £7,000.

February 3, 1904: Toowoomba was proclaimed a city.

ROMANCE IN THE COACHING DAYS

Interwoven with the old coaching days are many dealing with romance, adventure and deeds of daring, when high adventure and perilous journeys went hand in hand in the epoch-making struggle for man's supremacy over the elements.

Our City of Toowoomba was until 1857 known as the "Swamp," an agricultural suburban area near Drayton.

Owing to the demand for land on the "Swamp" Mr. J. C. Burnett surveyed in 1849 twelve farms on the western side of the swamp area ranging from 20 to 40 acres each. This included the land now known as between Stephen Street on the south, West Street on the west, Bridge Street on the north, and the western swamp was the eastern boundary. There was only one road through this land leading to Gowrie Station (it is now Russell Street).

In 1850 Mr. R. C. Bagot surveyed the land between the two swamps into allotments each containing $1\frac{1}{2}$ to

2 acres. A street ran due north and south which he named Ruthven Street because it ran to the east swamp near the intersection or junction of Gowrie Creek (Gowrie Creek was named in 1841).

Mr. Bagot's forefathers had been in the Scottish Royal Household when the Earl of Gowrie and the Earl's brother, Lord Ruthven, were murdered. So he merely said we shall put the brothers back together again. He then recalled the Scottish history of the period of the murder.

The main street in 1850 consisted of a few bark and slab huts and he named it James Street after the Scottish King who became James the first of England. As James I was of the House of Stuart he named the street running off James Street, Stuart Street. The other streets he named Herries Street after Lord Herries and Margaret Street after the Scottish princess who became Queen of England by marriage to Henry VII; he also named Hume and Perth Streets. This gives us the lay-out of our first survey.

The land was sold in 1853 by auction held at Drayton by authority of the New South Wales Government, and the price was from £2 to £8 per acre.

The population of Drayton and Toowoomba was only about 200 people. By 1858 the population had increased to 700 souls. The fame of the Darling Downs was spreading throughout the Southern Colonies and the Hunter River pioneers' sons began to move north.

In 1853 five Americans formed the firm of Cobb and Co. in Victoria. Their first stables in Brisbane were erected in Brisbane at Albert Street between Queen and Elizabeth Streets — these stables were destroyed by fire in 1866. Eventually extensive stables and offices were erected at Petrie Bight. Their Toowoomba Depot was located at the Queen's Arms Hotel, which is now the Club Hotel.

In 1870 Cobb and Co. were harnessing 6,000 horses a day in the three eastern colonies. Their coaches were travelling 28,000 miles a week. For mail subsidies they received £95,000 annually. Before the introduction of the American coach, swung on broad leather straps, there were a number of vehicles of all sorts in use plying irregularly between towns and villages, but they were hopelessly inadequate to cope with the demand.

Moreover, there was an element of discomfort about these vehicles that left much to be desired. On one of the original coaches running for the convenience of the Hunter River pioneers, among the passengers was a young lady accompanied by her aunt. Directly opposite was a young man who, after getting colonial experience up New England way, was on his way to visit some friends at Patterson. The driver of the coach decided to make up time by urging his four-in-hand into a smart gallop. As the coach travelled over the rough bush track a sudden jerk threw the young lady, whose name was Tillie, across the coach into the arms of Willie. Auntie endeavoured to recover Tillie off Willie's lap, but in doing so the posy of flowers on her bonnet became entangled in Willie's whiskers. The coach rolled on its journey not knowing the embarrassing situation being enacted within. When Tillie finally resumed her seat her hat and hair were slightly out of order. On arrival at the village Willie remained in the coach until Tillie had departed for her home. He then secured a horse and cantered off to his friend's home. On the following day all the residents of Patterson district attended divine service in the small local church. After the service all the congregation chatted over local affairs. Thus it was that Tillie was duly introduced to Willie. After that it seemed to be the regular thing to meet.

At about this time Willie was chosen by Mr. Cory of "Vacy" Station, Patterson River, to take a mob of hacks and Clydesdales to "Gostwick" Station, near Armidale, and then pick up a flock of sheep for delivery to Mr. Fred Isaac of Gowrie Station on the Darling Downs. On arrival at Tamworth the Peel River was a banker, so the horses were held on "Goonoo Goonoo" Station (pronounced Goon-a-ganoo) until the main body of water passed.

On the western side of the village empty barrels were secured from the Royal Oak Hotel and after the horses crossed, the carts carrying the camping gear were floated across. In due course the sheep were delivered to Mr. Isaac and the men mainly secured work in and around the Drayton Swamp area. Whilst at the settlement Willie learned that a man building a house in James Street desired to go west to Mitchell district,

so Willie secured the place. Whereupon he immediately returned to Patterson to endeavour to induce Tillie to marry and come up to the new settlement as her mother had done, when she married and helped to develop the Hunter Valley in 1820.

He explained that a great many of the people from the Valley were up there. To show the progress being made he referred to Miss Elizabeth Boulton, who had married Tom Alford. She arrived at the Swamp in 1842 with two little girls and resided in Drayton, which they had named. Mr. and Mrs. George Boulton, her parents, had gone to live at the Swamp. Their home was on the bank of the creek with a lake on the other side of the creek (his house was removed in 1867 to enable the railway station to be built). One of his daughters married Jimmie Taylor, of Cecil Plains, another married Joe King, of Clifton, another became Mrs. Sharkin and the other daughter married Mr. Pitt, of Pittsworth. Sophie did not marry. He said there were nine in the family. Of the boys only Martin was married. George and Tom were hard to please and remained single. So Tillie married Willie and they started on their journey north by coach from Patterson to Murrurundi.

The horses to be hitched to the coach were only half-broken-in colts. The two polers were fairly quiet. They were harnessed and attached to the vehicle, whilst the mails and luggage were roped on at the same time as most of the passengers took their seats. The driver mounted the box to secure the reins. He then braced one leg on the footboard and pressed his other foot on the brake whilst the men attached the young leaders. Before the bags were removed from the leaders' heads by the horseholders the driver called "All aboard." One passenger did not move, he merely said, "Let her go. I'll catch the next or ride." The holders jumped aside and the leaders reared and plunged. Then the team was off. They galloped for five miles. The colts went mad, sparks flew from their hoofs as the wheels flashed around, the passengers clung to the coach but were sometimes on the seats, then in a heap on the floor. But the coach sped on

swaying and rocking as the branches switched by; the horses had their manes and tails flying. It was a frightening picture to see their glassy eyes and lathering bodies. At about eight miles the team was changed. The coach duly arrived at Murrurundi on time.

From this town, progress further north was varied and uncertain. One secured a horse and rode or travelled on a bullock waggon. Willie and Tillie after a long and tedious journey arrived at their new home in James Street per cart.

The fireplace was four saplings with a couple of sheets of bark for a roof. Hanging down from a beam were several lengths of wire with hooks on them for the cooking utensils to be suspended over the fire. At the side of this galley there was a hole in which to place a camp oven for baking bread or damper, also to cook the week-end roast or leg of mutton. First the hole was half-filled with red-hot charcoal; after placing the oven on the coals, more coals were placed on the lid. At a later date a kitchen was built with a very large fireplace and a colonial oven duly installed. It was a sort of an iron box with a door with fire underneath, also a fire on the top.

After their arrival they often rode about among the tall trees and wattle scrub, following dray tracks leading to the swamp. One track that came from Drayton was quite close to their cottage and crossed the swamp at the back of the present baths and they saw several bullock drays camped there on what was then a camping reserve; now, it's the Queen's Park. On the corner where the Soldiers' Memorial Hall stands was a stock paddock or yard of four acres. It had four chain frontage to Ruthven Street and extended down Herries Street for two chains.

As the town began to form Mr. J. P. McLeish built quite a nice house on this corner and planted a number of fruit trees and formed a very attractive garden. He also opened a general store in the street about where the Domestic Furniture Company business is now located. Dr. Howling had a surgery next to Comerford's Volunteer Hotel (now the Gladstone). One night

his surgery was destroyed by fire and to overcome the difficult situation Mrs. McLeish immediately made two rooms in her house available.

Herries Street only went to the swamp, but the people had built a small fire station just about where Water Street is now located. In the shed there stood a vehicle with two wheels on which was built a framework around which the hose was wound. The fire-bell was up in Margaret Street on the ground at the back of the present Bank of New South Wales.