

THE AUSTRALIANA SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

MELBOURNE, 22nd May 1851

W^m Reynolds
D^r to S. CROOK,

UNDERTAKER.

A Horse-Drawn Coach & Carriage for funeral purposes
FOR HIRE

L. S. I.

Buildings Executed.
THE LONDON PRICES FOR CASH
Shops fitted up
Upholsterer &c.
Mathews, Palliser, Carpets, Stairs, Draperies.
Ac. &c.

Warranted the BEST QUALITY OF
Cabinet Maker.
4 Spring Beds for removing
Piano Fortes &c.

51			
May 21	To funeral expenses of the late Fred ^r & Cyrie King.		
"	Coffin, covered with gr. blk. cloth, lined, bed and, with mounted, & inscribed		
"	Use of hearse & w ^m .		
"	Use of Mourning Coach & w ^m .		
"	Use of best Pall, Attendance of Undertaker	14	11. 6
"	Attendance of 4 Bearers, with hands & gloves		
"	4 Blk. crape handkerchiefs & ties		
"	Lump sum & grave fees		
"	Advertising notice of funeral in two papers	10	



THE AUSTRALIANA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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An Australian Cabinetmaker's Billhead by Christina Simpson	p. 4
Hyde Park Barracks	p. 8
The Great Australian Furphy by Ian Rumsey	p.14
Going, Going, Gone! by Robert Hutchinson	p.15
In Praise of Old Surfaces by Julian Bickersteth	p.16
Fire Marks by Vaughan Evans	p.18
The Hahndorfer Kranken-Verein Cup	p.19
The Dictionary of Australian Artists by Patricia McDonald	p.25
Annual General Meeting -	
President's Report by Michel Reymond	p.11
Financial Statement for year ended 30 June 1984	
by Andrew Simpson	p.12
1984/5 Committee	p.10
List of Illustrations	p.17
Books	p.28
Membership Form	p.29
Guidelines for Contributors	p.30

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AN AUSTRALIAN CABINETMAKER'S BILLHEAD

by *Christina Simpson*

The elaborate billhead of the nineteenth century Melbourne cabinetmaker Samuel Crook, illustrated on the cover of this issue of the Newsletter and his biographical information has been drawn from the forthcoming publication 19th Century Australian Furniture, by Kevin Fahy, Christina Simpson, and Andrew Simpson.

The billhead reveals an association between Samuel Crook and the drawer and engraver of the billhead Thomas Ham. Both were the sons of Baptist ministers and members of the Baptist Church in Melbourne during early settlement. Samuel Crook (circa 1815-1883), was born in Sydney the son of Reverend William Pascoe Crook (1775-1846) and his wife Hannah née Dare. Reverend Crook was one of the first missionaries with the London Missionary Society who left England in the ship *Duff* in 1876, bound for the Pacific Islands. His association with Australia began in 1803, when he joined an expedition under David Collins, to form a settlement at Port Phillip, acting as chaplain in the ship *Ocean*. Following the failure of the settlement near Sorrento, Reverend Crook went to Sydney in 1804 and remained there until 1816 when he returned to the South Pacific as a missionary. Reverend Crook returned to Sydney with his wife and nine children in the *Olive Branch* 12 December 1830. The concern of Reverend Crook to place his grown children in suitable positions in Sydney was mentioned in correspondence from Reverend Samuel Marsden at the time, when he wrote he was pleased to know two of Crooks' daughters were working and another daughter had married a missionary. At this time his son Samuel was probably apprenticed to the cabinet making trade in Sydney. In 1839 Samuel Crook advertised in the *New South Wales and Port Phillip General General Post Office Directory*, as a cabinetmaker, upholsterer and undertaker at Castlereagh Street, Sydney. In that same year Samuel Crook left Sydney in the ship *Kate*, arriving in Melbourne on 3 August 1839, with his first wife Zenobia Ann, née Smart and their daughter Hannah. On arrival Samuel commenced business as a cabinetmaker in William Street. Garryowen, in his *Chronicles of early Melbourne 1835 - 1852*, said of Mr Crook:

The luxury of a hearse was unknown until the arrival of Mr Samuel Crook, who opened a cabinet and upholstery warehouse in William Street near the wharf. In January 1840 he issued a trade manifesto concluding with the consolatory intimation that Funerals would be furnished punctually and conducted in the neatest manner possible, and a hearse is in course of building and will be let out on hire.

A further comment by Garryowen about Samuel Crook, was the use of his show-room by the Reverend John Joseph Mouritz, when he wrote the following:

In July 1840, he came on to Melbourne from Sydney and officiated as a Baptist minister in a furniture show-room in a large two storied building belonging to Mr S Crook, which stood off the streetway on the land next to the Town Hall, now the site of the Victoria Coffee Palace.

Samuel advertised the opening of his new show rooms in *The Melbourne Times* 22 October 1842:

Furniture - S. Crook. Having completed his new Show rooms invites the inhabitants of Melbourne to an inspection of his extensive and well selected stock of English and Colonial manufactured articles comprising

every description of Household Furniture, which to meet the exigencies of the times will be offered at considerably low prices. Funerals, S. C. has received a supply of every requisite for Funerals of the first respectability, which will in future be furnished at the Sydney prices, viz from five pounds upwards. Having a very superior Spring Van just completed. Pianofortes and Furniture removed without any danger of being injured. Cabinet and Upholstery Warehouse. Collins St. East.

A practice at the time was for cabinetmakers to have a timber yard as part of their workshop. Samuel Crook advertised in *Ker's Melbourne Almanac and Directory* for 1842, the availability of every description of timber for sale. He later advertised in *The Melbourne Morning Herald and General Daily Advertiser* 1 January 1849, "Furniture of every description on hand and made to order, of the best Cedar, Blackwood, Huon pine, Cyprus etc etc..." The billhead dated 22 May 1851, adds a further dimension to the type of work produced by Samuel Crook, when he advertised as a builder and shop fitter, as well as an undertaker, upholsterer and cabinetmaker.

Samuel Crook was listed in directories at William Street in 1841, Collins Street in 1842 to 1850, and 71 Collins Street in 1851. Samuel owned the properties at 69 to 71 Collins Street in 1851. The Melbourne City Council rate books for that year showed the rates for those properties was the substantial amount of £130. In 1854 the properties had been sold by Samuel, and John Sleight was listed as the owner of the property at 71 Collins Street. Sleight was probably an old acquaintance from Sydney, who was listed in the New South Wales census of 1828 as an apprentice with Edward Hunt, a cabinetmaker in George Street, Sydney. John Sleight held an auction at his premises in York Street, Sydney in 1834, when he closed his business there and went to Tasmania, where in 1840 he was manager at the workshop of Robert Bell in Launceston, while Bell was overseas. By 1841 John Sleight was employed by Samuel Crook in Melbourne and soon after joined him in partnership. John Sleight was listed in directories in Melbourne as a cabinetmaker at McKillop Street in 1847 and 174 Latrobe Street in 1851. After the purchase of the property at 71 Collins Street, Sleight continued there as an undertaker until 1868, when he was listed in directories at 83 Collins Street.

By 1855 Samuel Crook had returned to Sydney and was listed in *Waugh and Cox Directory of Sydney and its Suburbs* for 1855, at Adolphus Street, Balmain. About 1857 Samuel married Eliza Horsley at Parramatta. In a letter from Mary Wright to Samuel's sister Mrs Henry Nisbet the wife of Reverend Henry Nisbet, a missionary in Fiji, dated 16 February 1858, Mary said Samuel had "given up the business at Balmain". In another letter to Mrs Nisbet from Samuel, 21 April 1858, he claimed to have "lost almost all". Samuel visited Melbourne in 1859 and soon after his return he had moved to Sherwood, near Parramatta, where he established an orchard and built a house called The Grange. Samuel died at Park Hill, Parramatta, 12 May 1883 and was buried in the Church of England section at Rookwood Cemetery. Samuel Crook was survived by two daughters and four sons by his first marriage, his second wife Eliza and their two sons and three daughters. His estate was sworn in at £4,405.

Samuel Crook's billhead was drawn and engraved by Thomas Ham (1821-1870)¹, a prominent engraver and lithographer who flourished in Australia during the mid nineteenth century. Thomas Ham was born the son of Reverend John Ham and his wife Elizabeth. When twenty one years, Thomas arrived in Melbourne with his parents in the ship *Dublin* 13 December 1842², on their way to Sydney where Reverend Ham intended to settle at Parramatta³. A number

of Melbourne Baptists including Samuel Crook wrote to Reverend Ham asking him to remain in Melbourne⁴. John Ham accepted and was the first Baptist minister of the Collins Street Baptist Church in 1843, where he remained until he went to Sydney in 1847⁵. In 1846 after the death of Samuel's father Reverend Crook, the Reverend Ham published his *Biographical Sketch of the Life and Labours of the late Reverend William Pascoe Crook*. Thomas was employed as the Government engraver and lithographer as well as having a business in Collins Street. The committee of the Council of the City of Melbourne commissioned Thomas in 1843 to engrave the Town Seal of Melbourne; that Seal was incorporated in Thomas Ham's own elaborate trade card, which was illustrated in the publication, *Thomas Ham. Pioneer Engraver*, by his grandson J W Collings in 1943, also illustrated was a portrait of Thomas Ham circa 1865⁶. A further dimension to the type of work produced by Thomas was advertised in *The Argus* 7 July 1851, when he conveyed the following:

To Merchants Settlers and Others who give pay or receive orders for money. Thomas Ham respectfully informs all persons who are in the habit of Giving or Paying Orders for Money that he continues to engrave and print Order Forms by a method entirely his own, which renders forgery impossible, each plate being engraved in a different manner, and by a process that cannot be imitated with success. Thomas Ham also calls attention to the fact that although he has engraved plates by this process for some time of the leading Merchants and Settlers in this and the neighbouring Colonies - supplying them with Order Forms to the amount in the aggregate of several hundreds of thousand - not one single case of Forgery has occurred.

Engraving Plate....40s
 Order Forms per 100, 5s
 Thomas Ham Engraver and Lithographer
 Collins Street Melbourne.

Thomas Ham supplied his copperplate engravings of Government Offices in Melbourne to the Reverend John Dunmore Lang, which were included in Lang's publication, *Port Phillip or the Colony of Victoria* published in Glasgow in 1853⁷.

The scene drawn by Thomas Ham for Samuel Crook's billhead could have existed in Melbourne in the 1840s. Thomas in his position as engraver and lithographer for the Government compiled plans and maps of Melbourne and was therefore familiar with the geographic position of buildings in the town. The scene in the billhead appears to be in William Street, which was the centre of Government in the 1840s and 1850s and a fashionable street in those days. On the right is Flagstaff Hill, which was at the corner of William and Latrobe Streets and was then used as a lookout for Melbourne. In 1840 a flagstaff was set up and a black ball was dropped from the staff as a time signal for noon each day. The following year a larger staff was installed with sets of halyards to run flags and a small cannon was placed at the base of the flagstaff which was fired when a ship arrived in the Bay⁸. An engraving by Thomas Ham circa 1850 from a drawing by G A Gilbert, who was a close associate of Thomas, of the Telegraphic Station on Flagstaff Hill, resembles the drawing in the billhead⁹. The engraving is in the Latrobe Collection, Melbourne. Further along William Street between Little Collins and Collins Streets was St James' Church of England, built near the site of the Pioneers' Church, which was a wooden building erected in 1837. St James' Church, was designed by Robert Russell an architect and former

surveyor and clerk of works with the Government. The building of the church was fraught with financial difficulties and it was finally opened unfinished in 1842, with only the base of the tower in position, as appears to be depicted in the billhead. In 1847 it was proposed to add a tower and not the spire in Russell's design. By 1851 the church was considered complete¹⁰. The church which became the Cathedral of the Church of England slowly deteriorated until 1914, when it was moved stone by stone and re-erected at the corner of King and Batman streets beside the Flagstaff Gardens¹¹. An engraving of Melbourne in 1856 by Inglis & Co. of Melbourne shows St James' church and Flagstaff Hill in similar geographic alignment as demonstrated in the billhead¹².

Another landmark which was then situated just beyond Flagstaff Hill, where the Victoria Market now stands was what is known as the Old Melbourne Cemetery, established in 1837 and closed in 1917¹³. The funeral procession in the billhead appears to be moving in that direction.

A building Thomas Ham could have sketched the view from was the Government Offices at the corner of William and Lonsdale Streets; also known as the Governor's Offices or Government House, it was situated where the Law Courts now stand. The building which stood well back from the streets had a curving driveway to its portico. A drawing of the building in 1856 was illustrated in *History Trails in Melbourne*, by W Lloyd Williams. It was an impressive Georgian two storey house, described by Williams as having:

A trim portico on the William Street front shaded the main door of the square grey granite building beneath its roof of slate. Peaked ornaments, called pediments, appeared like raised eyebrows above the doorway and the middle upstairs window, while the windows themselves seems to have had many small panes, in the style of those times¹⁴.

Since the Governor was Queen Victoria's representative in the colony, a room as elaborate as the one drawn could have been in the building. Whether the room decorated and furnished in a Regency style actually existed or was the result of artistic licence by Thomas Ham is difficult to determine without a similar contemporary engraving for comparison. The room then becomes a conversation piece, with its wide paned windows to permit a view of the scene beyond, which did actually exist, but placed with some artistic licence by Thomas. Hanging of the left wall are framed drawings of an Emu, an Aborigine and a view of Hobson's Bay, now known as Port Melbourne. On the right wall is a framed drawing of a Kangaroo. All were novel characteristics of Melbourne and viewed as such by the new settlers in the town, an idea substantiated by the mere fact they have been drawn and recorded and are hanging on the wall. An exception is the Masonic Lodge insignis hanging on the right wall of the room. It is known that Samuel Crook on 23 December 1839, attended a meeting of Freemasons in Melbourne and signed a petition to form The Lodge of Australia Felix, No.1. Samuel was elected Worshipful Master of the United Lodge of Victoria in June 1848¹⁵.

It is not known when Samuel Crook ordered the billhead to be produced by Thomas Ham. It may have been when he opened his new cabinet workshop and showrooms in 1842, which were situated in Collins Street, next door to the Town Hall and where the Victoria Hotel now stands. Did the room exist in Samuel Crook's new building which has been described as a large two storey building where a Baptist Minister preached to his brethren, or was it a room composed by Thomas Ham and Samuel Crook to contain elements pertaining to Samuel? The engraving relates to Samuel as an undertaker, by the inclusion

of a hearse and mourning procession, and as a cabinetmaker by the display of furniture in the room.

The billhead, as decorative and elaborate as an eighteenth century English trade card, survives as a fine Australian engraving pertaining to the nineteenth century Melbourne cabinetmaker, Samuel Crook.

REFERENCES:

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2. *Ibid*.
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9. McCulloch, Alan. *Artists of the Australian Gold Rush*. Melbourne 1977, page 13.
10. *History Trails In Melbourne*, page 19.
11. Freeland, J M, *Melbourne Churches 1836-1851*. Melbourne 1963, page 52.
12. *Ibid*, illustration No.4.
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HYDE PARK BARRACKS

The Hyde Park Barracks in Macquarie Street, Sydney, is regarded as one of the finest works of convict architect Francis Greenway. Although originally designed to house convicts, the building is nonetheless a splendid and elegant structure. Built of sandstock bricks set in lime mortar, it was designed in 1811 in the English Georgian style. Governor Macquarie, who commissioned the building, was so impressed with the result, that he arranged for Greenway's complete pardon after its opening in 1819.

Usually, 600 convicts were housed in the Barracks at any one time although this number often increased. They enjoyed a mixture of captivity and relative freedom, as there was little likelihood of escape into the relatively hostile environment beyond Sydney. When the transportation of convicts ceased in 1840, the Hyde Park Barracks became the Immigration Depot. Orphans and single females who arrived in the Colony in search of better prospects were housed in the building until employment and lodging could be found elsewhere for them.

Other authorities began to occupy part of the Hyde Park Barracks site, including the Government Printing Office, the New South Wales Volunteer Rifle Brigade and the Vaccine Institute. Between 1862 and 1866, the Barracks also served as the Hyde Park Asylum for aged, infirm, and destitute women. Ironically, the building's last and longest occupants were the District Courts

which took over the complex in 1888 and remained there until 1980.

When work on the restoration of the Mint and Barracks site commenced in 1975, labourers from the Public Works Department began to uncover not just floorboards, but many historic items which were hidden beneath them.

It was decided that such rich sources of history needed full exploration, and an archaeological dig jointly funded by the New South Wales Heritage Council and Public Works Department was started in early 1981. The dig had been primarily started to find architectural evidence to assist with the exacting task of restoration of the buildings. However, with such exciting discoveries, the project was soon expanded.

A team of thirteen archaeologists assisted by over 100 volunteers worked on all three levels of the Barracks, uncovering telling elements of the occupants and the building's history.

Under the floorboards of the top storey they found bottles of medicine, bandages and pieces of bedclothes.

On the second floor, the female immigrants of the 1840s had left a bounty of artefacts including babies' bonnets, aprons, cotton reels, costume jewellery and rosary beads. In some places bundles of clothes have been found where they were once stored for safekeeping.

On the ground floor, pots, shirts, and numerous bricks stamped with the convict arrow were discovered. And below that a huge network of rat warrens, where in their many nests were found heavy articles of cutlery and large bones.

The archaeological dig, which continued for six months, made a significant contribution to Sydney's heritage. The archaeological evidence gave new detail to the plans which were in existence; for example, the foundations of three undocumented dividing walls were exposed under the ground floor of the Barracks, and many of the artefacts themselves will be available for display in the very building in which they were used and hidden in for over a century.

In 1979 the New South Wales Government announced its intention to restore and transform the building into a Museum under the supervision of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Now the building and grounds are nearing completion and will be opened in September 1984.

The Hyde Parks Barracks, because of its unique link with the Settlement's early development, will house exhibits relating to the social history of the Colony. Its convict roots, political changes, people, urban growth, and relationships with the rest of the State are some of the themes that will feature in the new Museum.

The Hyde Park Barracks is the most important 'exhibit' of the Museum. Much has been done to retain its unique character and appearance and to build into the other exhibits its relationships to Sydney and our early heritage.

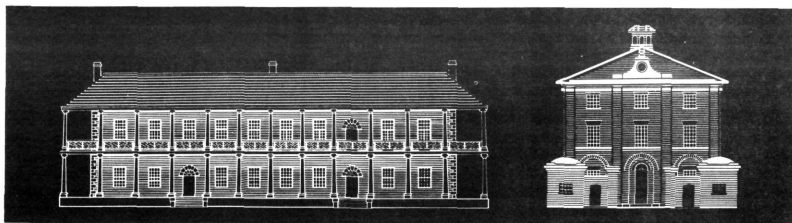
Inside the Barracks, the three floors have been returned to their stark original appearance. The floor and ceiling boards made of tallow-wood are mostly original, and several of the windows retain the early imported glass.

The building's most important and authentic feature is the top roof where the massive iron-bark beams are exposed as roof supports. This floor lends itself well to the planned displays of convict materials, and visitors will

see and hopefully sense what the environment was like in those early days. Throughout, the interior is painted beige in striking contrast to its sister, the Mint, which has been elaborately decorated in late nineteenth century styles.

Some interesting features of its varied occupancy over the years have been left uncovered. Paint scraped wall sections revealing old signs in the building, such as "Master of Lunacy's Office", and "Clerk of the Equity Court", add an interesting and historically realistic touch to the building itself.

Together with the Mint (a museum of Australian historical decorative arts, stamps and coins) the Hyde Park Barracks will become a unique museum complex which will prove a focal point of interest to overseas and local visitors alike.



1984-85 COMMITTEE

President:	<i>Michel Reymond</i>
Vice-President:	<i>Graham Cocks</i>
Vice-President:	<i>Shar Jones</i>
Secretary/Treasurer:	<i>Andrew Simpson</i>
Editor:	<i>John Wade</i>
Committee Members:	<i>Kevin Fahy</i> <i>John Houstone</i> <i>Alan Landis</i> <i>David Bedford</i> <i>Mike Darlow</i> <i>Robert Hutchinson</i>

President's Report

This year has been one of consolidation and expansion for the Society. The number of members who have joined the Society and those attending meetings has increased. This is, no doubt, due in part to the fact that we now hold regular meetings in the rooms of James R Lawson Pty Limited in Cumberland Street, The Rocks, a convenient and central location for many members. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of James R Lawson Pty Limited for so generously making the rooms available to the Society and for all their past, and I am sure future, support of the Society.

Looking back over the year's events, we have had our usual programme of interesting and always expert guest speakers, James Broadbent as special guest lecturer at the Society's Australia Day Dinner, as well as a visit to the collection of Dr Buttsworth at Balmain. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who organised activities for members during the year as well as our guest lecturers (Joseph Lebovic, Margaret Calder, Anne Schofield, and Shar Jones) for their excellent talks which provided much interest and stimulus to the members and without which the continuing interest of the members in the Society would be difficult to sustain.

In conclusion, I should also like to thank all the Committee for their help during the past year especially Andrew Simpson for his difficult job as Secretary and Treasurer, and John Houstone as custodian and provider of "liquid" refreshments at Society meetings. A special thanks is also due to our Editor, John Wade, whose enthusiasm and energy continues to produce our *Newsletter* 4 times a year despite the "desperate search" for contributors from time to time. The standard of the *Newsletter* has continued to rise.

Lastly, I should like to thank all the members for their support during the past year without which there would be no Society and I look forward to your continued support of the Society during the coming year.

I thank you all.



M B Reymond
President
2 August, 1984



Financial Statement For Year Ended 30th June, 1984

		<u>General A/C</u>	
<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Subscriptions	\$3188.69	Newsletter Production	\$2271.30
Auction Takings	\$2076.30	Auction Expenditure	\$1755.65
Australia Day Dinner	\$1525.00	Aust. Day Dinner Costs	\$1481.80
Private House Inspections	\$ 137.00	Stationary & Printing	\$ 208.37
Newsletter Sales	\$ 341.00	Newsletter Back Copy Refunds	\$ 27.50
Raffles	\$ 131.00	Refreshments	\$ 130.00
Advertisements	\$ 312.50	Advertisements	\$ 74.20
Bank Interest	\$ 61.52	Australia Post	\$ 368.87
		Deposit Life Members Account	\$1000.00
		Bank Charges	\$ 5.00
		Government Taxes	\$ 11.26
Sub Total	\$7773.01	Sub Total	\$7333.95
Bank Balance at 1/7/83	\$1539.82	Bank Balance at 30/6/84	\$1978.88
TOTAL	\$9312.83	TOTAL	\$9312.83

Life Members A/C

Transfer from General A/C	\$1000.00	Government Tax	\$ 0.30
Interest	\$ 16.75		
Sub Total	\$1016.75	Sub Total	\$ 0.30
		Bank Balance at 30/6/84	\$1016.45
TOTAL	\$1016.75	TOTAL	\$1016.75

I certify that I have examined and fully audited the vouchers, records and account books of the Society. They have been balanced and reconciled and constitute a true and correct statement of income and expenditure for the year ended June 30th, 1984.

Andrew Simpson
Treasurer.


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THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN FURPHY

by Ian Rumsey

Q: What is the origin of that good old Australianism "furphy"?

A: It was the brand name of carts used during the First World War to carry water to AIF troops in Europe and the Middle East. The drivers of those horse drawn water carts were notorious sources of gossip for the soldiers in their camps. The word "furphy" took on the meaning of rumour, or information of dubious worth, and soon became part of the diggers' language. With the troops' return home the colloquial saying was readily accepted by the civilian population into their vocabulary and today, sixty-five years later the term is still in wide use.

The exact date John Furphy established his iron foundry is not certain, but it was probably 1869 or 1870; these dates are deduced from advertisements placed for his Wyndham Street business in several Shepparton newspapers. Shepparton proved an ideal location for furphy's foundry, situated on the Goulburn River in the rich agricultural belt the explorer and surveyor Mitchell called "Australia Felix". Their agricultural farm machinery proved a great success in Victoria and Southern NSW, being cheap, sturdy and reliable. The most famous and distinctive product to carry the Furphy name was and still is after more than 100 years the water cart. Though now much changed from the first model, made about 1879 by the firm's founder, to replace the ubiquitous wooden casks or barrels. Those early carts had a capacity of 810 and 1,125 litres. They had cast iron ends carrying a distinctive inscription in Mr Pitman's shorthand notation, condemning alcohol and praising the virtues of water. (No doubt John Furphy was a strict teetotaler.) The body of the water tank was made from sheet steel rolled to form a cylinder. The cart frame was made of timber and fitted with cast iron wheels. The water cart stayed in this form until 1945, when rubber tyred wheels and a steel chassis were introduced.

The business flourished and expanded with the entry of John's sons into the firm. They continued their father's diversification from farm machinery to many other types of heavy and light goods, including railway rolling stock for the Victorian Government, domestic goods such as pot-bellied stoves, hall stands, pots and pans, and even fancy ornamental cast iron lace for the building trade.

The firm is nowadays a public company and still prospering, producing of course water carts, but the bulk of the engineering company's interests lie in producing numerous steel, stainless steel, cast iron, and aluminium tanks, mainly for the food processing industry, as well as conveyor and drainage systems for industry.

GOING, GOING, GONE!

by *Robert Hutchinson*

Most of us at some stage of our collecting life have bought at auction. Perhaps at one of the city auction rooms, at a country auction where everybody in town comes to see what this or that will bring, or at an onsite house sale, where we all like to see how people live, and imagine how all the sale lots go together.

But not everybody has sold at auction, and to be on the other side of the hammer can be quite an experience if you are not used to it.

Recently I decided that there were a few things in my collection that I could live without, so I decided "off to auction!" Sorting out what to send isn't all that difficult, it's what to keep that is. When that decision has been made, contact with the rooms is made, a time and date is arranged as a compatible collection is "to go under the hammer" (without too much damage I hope!) within the month, so transport is booked for the week before the sale. When the carrier arrived, I thought they had misunderstood, and thought I was moving, it was the biggest truck for such a small amount, but the driver assured me that his next job was a big move, not mine. Everything, I thought, was loaded and after a short journey we arrived and unloaded only to find that I had forgotten a major piece. The driver had his other job, and anyway, the cost did seem as if I had moved house, so I still have something I can live without. No matter, everything else is here.

Into the room to unpack the "smalls" and enter them with an estimate. Beauty, and value, is in the eye of the beholder, and some of the guesstimates left my mind blank. "I paid four times that" I thought at one estimate; "this is cracked, \$10 to \$15", or "Nobody is after this pottery anymore, twenty at the most. But I could be wrong". "I hope" I thought as the auction assistant did the estimating. I felt like taking it all home, but on a bus? - not with the school kids going home. After the last entry, a last look at my soon to go treasures in the cold unatmospheric auction room. I left.

I didn't go to the viewing days a week or so later, but went before the sale on the actual day. I looked at everything, checked the catalogue and recognised some of my things. The descriptions sounded wonderful, the \$10 to \$15 cracked pot sounded superb, and the pottery nobody wanted could well have been Chelsea or Bow - even I wanted it, by the description, so when the auction started. I didn't know what to bid on. Of course there were things I did buy, but in the excitement and the enthusiasm of the auction, I almost bid on something I didn't want, so no bid that time. Seeing things one has collected and loved being sold to strangers, one gets a funny feeling and hopes that they go to a good home, or that the dealer will treat them well. The plaque I paid \$35 for only bought \$12, but the garage sale \$5 vase goes through the roof (for me) at \$275. The buyer and I are both happy, and he unknowingly smiles at me after the sale.

I try to keep a tally of what I had entered into the sale, but with all the excitement and bidding, my calculations were out. About two weeks later, when the statement and cheque arrive, I realise that all the self worry was worth it and auction selling is fun. I shall try it again, after I have finally gotten over the first time.

IN PRAISE OF OLD SURFACES

by *Julian Bickersteth*

A recent advertisement in a national paper recommended the buying of a company's solid timber tables, the prime selling point being that "after a lifetime of service they can be sanded back and repolished, just like restoring any antique, to start another whole new life". One would like to think such a statement would send a shudder through any discerning antique collector or restorer. But the retaining of old surfaces on antique furniture is a subject on which there are widely differing opinions around the world. The restoration of a piece of furniture in France invariably includes stripping and a complete repolish, to reveal and enhance the original colour of the wood and the elaborate marquetry and parquetry, which is so often a feature. Likewise any tarnished ormolu would be cleaned and polished. French furniture was spectacular when it was made, and the French believe that is the way it should stay.

But with the restoration of Australian furniture, in which there is limited use of contrasting woods, there are two main influences at work, which could be loosely termed the English view and the American view. Both England and America contain connoisseurs who disagree with their country's general trend, but for our purposes, the English view is that an antique piece IS its old surface; strip it, and the value is halved. Whereas the American view is that antique furniture is old by its style and general feel, rather than by its old surface, and that a clean and pristine finish is to be preferred, as intended by the maker.

The influence of the American View can be seen in the advertisement above, and it is at work amongst the so-called "Dip & Strip" brigade whose offerings can be found at antique fairs and shops countrywide. These will often have been stripped of their old surface in caustic soda tanks, sanded or scraped, and then repolished, often with an "improved" modern finish. Caustic soda (sodium hydroxide) is all very well for stripping layers of paint from doors, but when it comes to fine furniture, the longterm result can be disastrous. The caustic, if it is not very carefully neutralised, can later react with the finish, and it also has the effect of reducing the adherence of the animal glue, used to hold the joints together. This means that the piece often has to be knocked apart, and reglued with consequential damage. but the worst effect it has is on the surface of the wood itself, drawing the life out of it, and ensuring that however well it is finished, it will never again have any depth to it. Then when it comes to the refinishing, a polyurethane varnish may well have been used, particularly if the piece is a table, as it will provide a heat and water resistant surface. However, recent conservation research has shown the total unsuitability of polyurethanes as finishes for wooden objects. Not only do the finishes deteriorate visually with time, and before long look dead and lifeless, but their chemical structure is such that they continue to harden with time to the extent that before long no solvent will dissolve them.

The whole point, however, about the original finish, whether it was originally waxed or french polished, is that it is improving with time

and will continue to do so. With so much antique furniture changing hands regularly, and therefore the need to restore it in order to make it more saleable becoming greater, it is all the more important, I believe, that the English view should predominate. The correct word for the appearance of an old surface is patina a feature acquired by all objects as a result of their finish, usage and care or neglect. The surface on a modern reproduction or refinished antique is invariably uniform, flat and thus lacking in depth of colour. Moreover, it will look identical to other pieces finished in the same way. The patina on an original surface, however, is unique, purely because no two pieces have ever been treated identically. That patina is the outcome of the complex mixture of various interactions, depending on how it has been looked after or neglected; on the waxing lavished or skimped on it; on the amount of chemical changes which have taken place in the wood as it has oxidised on exposure to air; and on the natural bleaching, which has taken place as a result of ultra violet sunlight. It is an ever continuing process, as long as that old surface is allowed to remain, and the result should be a surface of many small variations in colour, of mellow browns and yellows, of soft reds, and perhaps of a warm chestnut glowing like caramel, darker in places where dirt has been allowed to build up, and broken by the scratches and bruises of use, which mark it out so indisputably as to be a true antique. Of course, it is nothing like the original finish as intended by the maker, but that is not the point. Not only is that original surface impossible to retrieve, but what now results is an old surface providing in itself its own little microcosm of social history.

However, having said all this, there are times when the old surface has been so abused, that it is impractical to leave it in its present state. Sometimes it may even be necessary to remove part or all of it, but there are sympathetic ways of doing this. In further articles I intend to look at how this can be done. Andy Simpson provided some useful hints on cleaning furniture in the *Newsletter*, 1979 No.3, and I hope to add to these, and explore how excessive accumulations of dirt on old surfaces can be removed, and old surfaces given back a little of the lustre they may be lacking, which so greatly adds to any antique furniture

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

COVER: Billhead of Samuel Crook, engraved by Thomas Ham, about 1842.

INSIDE FRONT COVER: Hyde Park Barracks, top floor, revealing ironbark beams.

INSIDE BACK COVER: Water cart by J Furphy and Sons, Shepparton, Victoria, c.1910.

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FIRE MARKS

by Vaughan Evans

A feature of many 19th Century city buildings in Australia was the "fire mark" secured to the facade, usually between the first floor windows so as to be beyond the reach of vandals or pilferers. The fire mark was a brightly painted, embossed, cast or pressed metal plate about 250 x 200 mm (10 x 8 inches) bearing the device of a fire insurance company and, in the very early years, the number of the policy.

The use of these marks goes back to the years immediately following the Great Fire of London in 1666. The Fire Office in 1680 formed "a company of men well-versed and experienced in extinguishing and preventing of fire", the first fire brigade in London, to protect property insured by that office. Other companies soon followed suit and, when various crews turned out in response to a fire alarm, they needed some quick means of identifying in which office the property at risk was insured. The fire mark was designed to fill this need. No house was deemed to be "secured" until the mark was fixed to it by one of the company's men.

On arrival at the scene of a fire all the brigades except the one whose company mark was on the burning house might go away again, or remain in the background, passive except to jeer or cheer the team of the rival office, or to keep an eye on adjoining properties insured by their own offices and at risk. A house without a mark might be left to burn. Others might have several marks, indicating either that the house owner had insured the building with one office and his tenants their individual contents each with the company of their choice, or perhaps that marks relating to policies lapsed and replaced with another company had not been removed.

In London the fire insurance companies formed a joint fire brigade in 1833 for the use of all and, from this date onwards, the value of fire marks declined. One company, the Royal Exchange, ceased to issue them about the year 1838, but in many cases they continued in use as a form of advertising until about the turn of the current century. Australian fire insurance was introduced by English companies, and it is hardly surprising that they brought with them the idea of using fire marks. Nowadays few of these plates may be seen in their original situations, although on some old terrace houses in Sydney, for example, one can see where they once were. They are of far greater value on the property they once protected than in a collection, even where their provenance is known and recorded. Many marks have been salvaged from demolished properties and have found their way into private hands.

Now a group has formed an Australian branch of "The Fire Mark Circle", an organisation formed in England in 1934 to "bring together persons interested in the origin and history of fire insurance companies, their fire marks, fire brigades and fire fighting equipment, firemen's badges, medals and tokens and all that pertains to the past of fire insurance for the purpose of exchanging and recording information and for the preservation of relics of the early days of fire insurance." Collectors and other interested persons or organisations are invited to write to Peter Kell, c/- General Accident Fire & Life Assurance Corporation P.L.C., GPO Box 138, Sydney, 2001.

THE HAHNDORFER KRANKEN-VEREIN CUP

The inscription on a piece of Australian silver is often the only key to the story behind it, and if it is erased then history is lost and our heritage is the poorer. A case in point is a small Steiner cup sold in Adelaide last year. Not outstanding in design or workmanship, it was the inscription on the bowl which set it apart from the normal run of trophy and presentation cups. The flourishing script read:

Gewidmet
v. a
Hahndorfer Kranken = Verein
ihrem Secretair
R. Strenz
1869.

This records the giving of the cup by the Hahndorf 'Workmen's Sickness Society' to its Secretary, R Strenz, presumably on his cessation of office.

The cup is 19.4 cm high, and is constructed in four sections. The base is in the form of a low dome above a plain foot rim, embossed and chased heavily with simple flowers and foliage. Secured to the base by a nut is a baluster shaped stem, at the top plain, but with the bottom half engraved and chased with stiff leafage. Forming a removable calyx at the top of the stem is a collar of chased acanthus like leaves formed separately but soldered together. The bell shaped bowl screws through the calyx into the stem. Rising around the base of the bowl is a border of chased leafage, topped by a border of scrollwork. The central third of the bowl is left for the inscription, while below the rim is a running border of engraved and chased fruiting vine. The interior is gilt. Three rectangular marks are grouped on the outside of the foot - H St^l, flanked by a lion passant on one side and an emu on the other, both facing right.

The R Strenz was one Johannes George Robert Strenz¹, or Georg Wilhelm Robert Strenz², but known usually as Robert. Born in Breslau, Prussia, on 14 March 1837³, he arrived in Australia at an unknown date. He is recorded as having been one of the earliest members of the Hahndorfer Deutscher Institut in 1861/62⁴, and was its librarian from about 1863 to 1871⁵. In 1862 he replaced R Ey as the teacher at the Lutheran Day School⁶, and remained there until his death in 1871. Strenz was secretary of the Kranken-Verein from its inception in 1866⁷ until, presumably, he was presented with the cup in 1869. When 29 he married the 19 year-old Johanne Pauline Wieth at St Michael's Lutheran Church, Hahndorf, on 22 November 1866. Pastor Strempele performed the ceremony⁸. His death less than five years later was both sudden and tragic. On Saturday 4 March 1871 he died in his house, having committed suicide by swallowing morphia⁹. Pastor Strempele refused to bury the suicide, so the Wesleyan Rev. T Edmeades interred him at St Michael's Lutheran Cemetery¹⁰. A large crowd attended. The verdict at the inquest into his death was that he had committed suicide while temporarily insane.

Before looking more carefully at Strenz's life in Hahndorf, it is worthwhile to have a closer look at the town and its institutions. In common with several

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other "German" towns in S.A., Hahndorf had its origins in the religious persecution of the so-called "Old Lutherans" by King Frederick William III of Prussia¹¹. Under the pressure of this persecution a group of about 500 German settlers, mostly with rural backgrounds, left their homes in the Prussian provinces of Posen, Brandenburg and Silesia under the leadership of Pastor Augustus Kavel¹². Kavel left on the first of the ships carrying his flock, the "Prince George", in June 1838. Then followed the "Bengalee", the "Zebra", and the "Catherine"¹³. The "Zebra" was a Danish ship under Captain Dirk Meinerts Hahn. During the 129 day voyage to Holdfast Bay a mutual affection and respect grew between the Captain and his passengers¹⁴, and it was through his offices in negotiating with F H Dutton¹⁵ that they were able, not long after arriving at Adelaide, to leave their "staging post" at Port Adelaide and set up their village on part of the Special Survey of 4,000 acres in the Mt Barker district owned by Dutton, Finnis and MacFarlane¹⁶. In gratitude they named the village Hahndorf - Hahn's village.

Most of the settlers could not afford the expense of cartage by dray to the hills, and by slow degrees pushed, pulled, and carried their goods to their destination, the first group arriving in March 1839¹⁷. Of the fifty two families settling there, 38 were from the "Zebra", and "Each family was allotted a homestead block of about 1 acre as well as other blocks...."¹⁸. A difficult winter followed, but by using native foods and local materials and by hand sowing crops the township became established. Within months it began to supply an Adelaide short of fresh foods with local produce¹⁹. According to the census of 1840 "...the German settlement of Hahndorf ... contained a church, 52 houses, a public house, cattle sheds, and stockyards"²⁰. By 1844 about 1500 Germans were resident in the state among their five villages, all of which were in a flourishing condition²¹. They had a high reputation as frugal and hard working²², and were much appreciated by hirers of labour.

The gold rushes of the early 1850s stripped S.A. of much of its agricultural and other labour, the main exceptions being the German settlers²³. Although by now the original settlers had been added to many times over by later arrivals in search of a better life, the underlying reliability remained. George Fife Angas, under whose aegis the flock of Kavel had come, was to write: "I suffer less, perhaps, than any employer of labour, in consequence of the aid the Germans render me as farmers, shepherds, sheepshearers, & c. Few of them have left the colony..."²⁴

At the same time Strenz was living in Hahndorf the town was still a place of unsealed roads without kerbs or lighting, with a population of about 400, and where German dialects were still the most common forms of speech²⁵. Changes to the town were slow, and even in 1889 a journalist was to write of "...Hahndorf, a quaint and picturesque German town, consisting of about half a mile of houses and gardens on each side of the road The German colonists have here their own Lutheran Churches and a fine Academy, and some of them so habitually adhere to their own language that they find a difficulty in making themselves understood in the English tongue"²⁶.

Hahndorf, like the other German settlements, valued education highly. In 1839 lessons were held in the open, then in a hut²⁷. By 1856 the Lutheran Day School was the only school in the town, but the teacher Wilhelm Boehm rebelled against the restrictions of the church and resigned. A few months

later he began his own school, which was to become the Hahndorf Academy²⁸. In 1862 the teacher at the Day School again resigned, and Robert Strenz took over the position. Strenz seems to have been one of those "newer" settlers of Hahndorf, feeling less bound by the strictures of the church and more liberal in his outlook than some of the earlier settlers appreciated. Soon the Day School was acting as the primary section for the Academy, the teachers Strenz and Boehm being regarded as "talented and temperamental"²⁹. Strenz, as well as running the school, was one of the first members of the Hahndorfer Deutscher Institut, founded in 1861³⁰. When teacher Ey left the town in 1862 Boehm took over from him as secretary of the Institute, while Strenz, Ey's replacement, became the Institute librarian in about 1863. He threw himself into the activities of the Institute, which were the main intellectual outlets for the town. The library held, as well as the Adelaide dailies and perhaps the Melbourne "Argus", the "Tanunda Deutsche Zeitung" and the "Adelaider Deutsche Zeitung", and Lutheran Church papers. German papers, the "Augsburg Allgemeine" and the "Kunstritter" were also subscribed to³¹.

The Institute, with its lectures, books and gatherings was a social centre. For its third birthday a party was held for which "...A. von Doussa and Teacher Strenz prepared the Punch and decorated the Institute Room with gum leaves ...". Strenz gave a long lecture, and when speeches and punch were finished the party adjourned to the Union Hotel for dinner and late celebrations. He lectured again on 30 Jan. 1864, the subject being "The National Pride of the German People", then the following July 6 he spoke on "Air Pressure" and on October 1 he held forth again³². His talents were not confined to lectures, punch and gum leaves, as a poem of his was printed in the Tanunda Deutsche Zeitung of 29 Dec. 1865.

The following year Strenz was involved in the formation of the Kranken Verein³³. This "Workmen's Sick Fund" was a form of friendly society, paying medical and death benefits to the subscribing members. At the time the only such cover available to most people was through Lodges or similar societies, membership of which was denied to Lutherans by their church. A similar Kranken Verein operated in Adelaide in association with the German Hospital there³⁴. At Hahndorf the Kranken Verein met on Saturday night, and the following day the treasurer paid the doctor his dues³⁵. It survived in Hahndorf until World War 1, when for obvious reasons it changed to become the Hahndorf Friendly Benefit Society³⁶.

Strenz continued as librarian and leading light of the Institute, and when a grand celebration was held for the centenary of the birth of the German scientist Alexander von Humboldt he was once again a speech maker³⁷. Later in 1869 the eighth birthday of the Institute was celebrated, and once more the Institute room "... had been decorated festively and most tastefully - thanks to the efforts of the librarian (Mr R Strenz) whose contributions and support of the Institute had helped it to thrive. The decorations did not fail to make a good impression on all those present - an impression which did not get less effect by the sight of an appropriate number of glasses waiting ..."³⁸. The President, Dr Bernini, opened the meeting with a short speech and toast to the welfare of the Institute, and called upon Strenz as the "festival speaker". He rose to the occasion with a sketch of the Institutes history. Then in calling for the toast his speech became effusive:

Upon this, calling upon the festive atmosphere which must be part of the

German feelings, the meaningful saying: 'Cheers to what we love!' was to be the motto of the actual Festival speech and it shows all that this saying includes, being worthy of our love this evening. Thus the free German word coming from German hearts and penetrating hearts again - the German word it is which urges German actions.

The German loyalty which has always been praised as the gem of the German national character, brightly shining, holding on to all beautiful memories of our old German Fatherland of which we can be so proud, greeting it by our festive assembling here etc. etc.

He summarised everything that has been noted as lovable, wishing that it all may be unified in the toast 'Cheers to all that, it is all that we love and three cheers to it!'

This toast also had a vivid response.³⁹

Although the speech may sound excessive now, it was the exact counterpart of the florid toasts and addresses voiced by British colonists of the time. After an appropriate toast in turn to the librarian and the close of official business, the guests moved to the German Arms for dinner and more celebrations, the guests finally arriving home at 2 am.⁴⁰

The schools continued to operate well under the two Institute stalwarts Boehm and Strenz, and plans were set in motion for them to expand. "Now, in early 1871, came the high point of this development. Wilhelm Boehm, and his equally talented and temperamental counterpart in the Lutheran Day School, Johannes George Robert Strenz, had embarked on a most ambitious building programme. The Academy became a two storey establishment, somewhat more like it appears today, and a new Lutheran Day School was erected on the adjoining block. On 10 February and 1 February, 1871, respectively, the new schools were opened to the accompaniment of banquets, fireworks, and street processions Boehm could afford his moments of pride ... following the opening of what were undoubtedly the most imposing buildings in Hahndorfer and a unique educational arrangement for South Australia.

Suddenly, this brave new world came to a dramatic crash. Late on Saturday afternoon, 4 March, news spread like wildfire through Hahndorf's close-knit community that teacher Strenz had died.

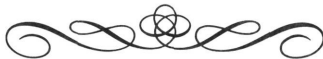
Indeed it was so - Dr Bernini found that the unfortunate man had expired at 3.20 pm in the teacher's residence following his swallowing of a teaspoon of morphine. At the inquest, financial difficulties were accepted as the cause of this sad event.⁴¹

With the burial of Robert Strenz and the auctioning of his effects he passed from the life of a unique town, left to lament the loss of teacher, librarian, friend and husband. A new teacher came, and his wife remarried, but the cup bought from Henry Steiner still carries the story of a "Talented and temperamental" man.

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THE DICTIONARY OF AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS

The Power Department of Fine Arts at the University of Sydney is busy compiling a dictionary of Australian artists - painters, sculptors, engravers and photographers - of the 19th century. The first section, with names from A to H, is being progressively added to and up-dated on the Department's computer, directed by society member Dr Joan Kerr with the assistance of Ms Patricia McDonald, Heather Curnow and Christine Dickson.

It is soon to be published in preliminary form, in a limited number and then circulated to specialists in the expectation that they will be able to correct and add to the draft before it goes into definitive form, with illustrations.

The compilers have provided some sample entries from the *Dictionary*, which will indicate the type of information to be found in the work, and incidentally how society members John Houstone and Bill Chapman have already provided information. We have also illustrated one of the medals signed as engraver, (see the *Newsletter*, back cover, 1984 No.2, April 1984), presented by Lawrence Halloran to Charles Driver in 1823, and acquired two years ago by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

CLAYTON, SAMUEL (-1853), portraitist, engraver, and silversmith, was transported to Australia from Dublin for seven years, arriving on the *Surry* in 1816. He first advertised his services in the *Sydney Gazette* on 4 January 1817 as "taking likenesses either in full or in profile". Subsequently he offered to give instruction "in ornamental painting and drawing" as well as engraving and miniature painting. By 15 August 1818 he was stating that he had "a variety of jewellery and silver work on hand" and was buying old silver. Clayton had also engraved the first banknotes for the Bank of NSW when it opened its doors on 8 April 1817, having been directed in February of that year to prepare the copper plates needed for the Bank's five denominations of banknotes ranging from two shillings and sixpence to five pounds.

His multifarious activities also included making silhouette portraits. On 4 November 1820 he advertised in the *Sydney Gazette* that he now had "ready for practice, a much improved machine for taking likenesses, in profile, on a most correct principle, and in a few minutes, at ten shillings each, on Bristol Card, such as is now the London style, and particularly portable, as they may be conveyed in letters to relatives or friends, without injury, to any part of the world".

Clayton received his ticket-of-leave on 1 October 1824 and married Jane Lofthouse by special license two weeks later, on 14 October. His wife died in 1829. Clayton continued to work in Sydney until 1831 when he offered his business for sale. The contents included "a brass machine for taking profile

likenesses, and a camera obscura". He moved to Windsor in 1835, presumably to be near his son by his first marriage, Dr Benjamin Clayton, who practised there. That he prospered is evidenced by the fact that in 1839 he was one of the proprietors of the Bank of New South Wales. Clayton died at Gunning, New South Wales in 1853, leaving an estate worth one thousand pounds to Benjamin.

Most of Clayton's known extant work is in silver. Work attributed to him includes two trowels now in the Mitchell Library: one engraved for Lieutenant-Governor Erskine in 1823, a present from the Masonic Lodge number 260, Sydney; the other presented to Governor Macquarie after he had laid the foundation stone of the Sydney Roman Catholic Chapel in 1821. Both incorporate Masonic details in the engraving, Clayton like Macquarie being an active member of the local Lodge. Three medals presented to students at the Sydney Grammar School between 1822 and 1824 are known, one given to Francis Lord by his schoolmaster, Laurence Halloran, the second to Henry Halloran and the third to Charles Driver. A spoon marked "S.C." and an anchor are in private collections. It has also been suggested that an Irish two-handed cup, presented to Mr Emmett as owner of the winning horse Rob Roy in the Hyde Park race of 1819, was engraved by Clayton, although there is no evidence to support this claim.

Clayton gave evidence at the trial of Alexander Dick (see Craftspersons) in 1829, stating that he "rather thought" that the dessert spoons Dick was accused of receiving were made locally. Trial records include a letter from James Garfield, a London silversmith transported for forging hallmarks. Garfield states that neither James Robertson, another witness, nor Clayton ever manufactured silver plate, and that they were dealers and not makers. If this is correct the above articles may well have been made by Clayton's employees or other silversmiths.

INFORMATION" John Houstone; Richard Neville.

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DENIS, JOSEPH: see DENNIS, JOSEPH

DENISON, MARY CHARLOTTE, artist, executed pencil, ink and watercolour sketches of scenery in New South Wales and Tasmania. Her landscapes, dated between 1847 and 1854, include views of Wollongong, New England and the Hawkesbury River in New South Wales; Hobart and the Franklin Valley in Tasmania. She appears to have been a daughter of Sir William Thomas Denison (1804-1871), governor of Van Diemen's Land (1846-1854), of New South Wales and governor-general (1855-1861), and his wife Caroline nee Hornby.

REPRESENTED: ML

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DENNIS, H , artist, was described by *Heads of the People* on 28 August 1847 as "an historical painter of great merit, and the best oil painter in the colony". This was probably a misprint for Joseph T Dennis (q.v.)

DENNIS, JAMES, painter, "of Sydney", sent one oil, 'The Transfiguration of Narcissus', to the Victorian Exhibition of Fine Arts held in Melbourne in 1861. The same painting was later shown at the 1870 Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition, together with 'Italian Beggar Boys' after Murillo. By this time Dennis had moved to Parramatta. He may be connected with the artist Joseph Dennis (q.v.)

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DENNIS (DENIS), JOSEPH T(RACTON?), painter, scene painter and actor, was born in Ireland, the son of Counsellor Dennis of Cork. He arrived in Sydney aboard the *Tropic* on 9 February 1838 and attempted to establish a career as a portraitist. His life-sized portrait of Chief Justice Dowling was praised by the *Sydney Herald* of 16 October 1840, when it was "just finished": "the artist has been peculiarly successful in catching the peculiar expression of his face, which the Chief Justice assumes when he has said a good thing; there is that peculiar look which His Honor puts on when he wants to smile at one of his own repartees, but considers it beneath his dignity to do so. The picture is valuable as a portrait, admirable as a work of art, and must establish M Dennis' fame as a very successful artist". Nevertheless Dennis was forced to seek employment with the Royal Victoria Theatre, becoming principal scene painter by November 1840. He is next recorded as a witness at the trial of two Government Printing Office employees, James and John Spring, held the following year.

In the early 1840s Dennis moved to Parramatta and established a popular theatrical group, the Dennis Players, at the *Steam Packet Inn*. The crowds rapidly increased and in about 1844 he opened his own theatre in Church Street. Dennis played an active role in the cultural life of the district, forming a close friendship with W Griffith (q.v.) and other local artists, as well as lending support to the 1846 Parramatta Art Union. At the same time he worked as a landscape and portrait painter.

An exhibition of his portraits went on display at Mr Ellyard's establishment in George Street, Sydney during July 1843. In 1847 Dennis' earlier 'Portrait of Sir James Dowling' was loaned to the Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia Exhibition and received high praise. A copy by the artist Joseph Backler (q.v.) was later hung in the New South Wales Supreme Court. Dennis returned to Sydney in the mid-1840s, but was badly affected by the current economic depression.

His last major work, 'Lot and His Daughters leaving Sodom and Gomorrah', was entered in the historical section of Grocott's Third Art Union. This too attracted considerable attention. "The figures of Lot and his daughters and the angels are admirably drawn", claimed the *Sydney Morning Herald* critic of 20 July 1850, "but the burning town in the distance is not managed well ... on the whole, however, there is much originality and cleverness in the picture that is very creditable to the artist".

Little is known about Dennis' remaining years. He settled in Campbelltown outside Sydney, and may have established a local artistic clientele. In 1870 he sent two historical paintings, 'An Old Man telling his Beads' and

'St Peter's Release from Prison', to the Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition. These were described by the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 1 September 1870 as "crude pictures", suggesting that Dennis had lost his earlier facility.

Few of Dennis' works have survived. The Mitchell Library owns the original 'Portrait of Sir James Dowling' and in 1983 acquired another oil painting 'Portrait of Henry Smithers Hayes', dated 1846.

Dennis may have been the father of James Dennis (q.v.)

INFORMATION: W Chapman.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: E Buscombe, *Artists in early Australia and their Portraits*, Sydney 1978; C Rivett, *The Art Union Story and Old Parramatta*, Sydney 1953; *Australian* 12 November 1840 p.3, 21 August 1841 p.1; *Bell's Life in Sydney* 22 June 1850; *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 July 1843, 26 July 1847, 25 January 1855.

Patricia McDonald

BOOKS

FURNISHING OLD HOUSES by Ian Evans. Sydney, Macmillan, 1983, \$24.95.

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COLOUR SCHEMES FOR OLD AUSTRALIAN HOMES, by Ian Evans, Clive Lucas, and Ian Stapleton, published by the Flannel Flower Press (18 Mansfield Street, Glebe, 2037) in June 1984 as a paperback, \$16.95

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