

February
2009

NEWSLETTER

I know we all start 2009 with an air of overwhelming sadness due to the ongoing tragedy happening to the communities in country Victoria. Our thoughts and sympathy, are with all those affected country Victorians. At the same time, the skill, and extraordinary bravery of our fire-fighters, the wonderful closely-held Australian spirit of "mateship", and community generosity, has risen in full force to take on the many challenges ahead.

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE CITY OF MOORABBIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOR 2009 WILL BE HELD NEXT SUNDAY 22ND OF FEBRUARY COMMENCING AT 1PM.

The Committee hopes that everyone had a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year, and looks forward to seeing all our members once more. Best wishes for a speedy recovery to those members who have been on the "sick list"

➔ *May I please draw to your attention that the 2009 Annual Member's Subscription Fee of \$3.00 is now due.*

Note from the Editor: I found this fascinating description of the original 'Box Cottage', (prior to it's demolition), as reported by an eye witness, in a 1962 Newsletter, whilst I was searching through the Moorabbin Historical Society early Minute Books.

The following excerpt is transcribed directly from that City of Moorabbin Historical Society Newsletter, October 1962.

"A PIECE OF HISTORY IN ORMOND"

The Moorabbin Historical Society is always grateful for people who make information available to them. So we appreciate the kindness of Mr J Reitman in letting one of our members see his old home, now part of his cement products factory at 306 Jasper Road, Ormond.

The cottage, (not the one which can be seen from the road), was built about 120 years ago by (1) Mr Box, grandfather of Mr H Box, Jasper Road,

Mc Kinnon. It was later sold to Mr Downard, from whom Mr Reitman's father bought it for 1200 Pounds, in about 1915. It was then surrounded by market gardens. At that time giving a home a name was more fashionable than it is today; the Reitman's named their little cottage "Colonial". Mr Reitman cherishes the black and white name plate.

The house was built on tree-stumps and is of weather-board with a floor of hand-made bricks. The roof is of galvanized iron over split palings fastened to the iron with lead screws.

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The walls are lined with hessian-backed wall paper. Each window, which measures about three feet by five, has twelve panes. The doors are panelled.

The dairy is particularly interesting. It has a stone floor and solid brick walls fourteen inches thick. Keeping food in such a room was one of the few methods of refrigeration known to early settlers. Here would be kept the milk, cream and butter used by the family, and from the ceiling still hang the hooks which held the meat.

Mr Reitman presented the Historical Society with a porcelain door knob from the door of one of the bedrooms.

Author Unknown

Editor's Post Script, January 2008

(1) On previous searches of Titles it has been established that the cottage was not built by Mr Box, but rather by an *unknown* pioneer in the 1850's. Unfortunately as the Rates were not being collected in that "isolated" area in 1850, there is no record of that pioneering builder's name. Instead the cottage was named after the Box family who moved in, in about 1865.

(2) The original "Colonial" name plate was kindly donated to "Box Cottage" on 19th April 1984 by W Reitman, and is on display on the kitchen wall today.



'Box Cottage' in 2005

Note the split-shingled roof, prior to the installation of the galvanized roof.

The late Tom Sheehy in February 1979, relates the following interesting story of the early vineyards of Moorabbin. I hope you find it as interesting as I did !

THE VINEYARDS OF MOORABBIN

When the Port Phillip District was separated from NSW, (on 1st of July 1851), and declared the State of Victoria, the present City of Moorabbin was not even thought of; the wide area which now covers east of Boundary Road and south of South Road amounted to nothing more than a nonentity in the area known as the County of Bourke, beyond the Brighton Survey. Yet within the boundaries of Point Nepean, South, East Boundary and North Roads, and Thomas Street, which were also destined to become part of our city, there was brick-nogged pioneer's home where the district's first industries were being nurtured. Unfortunately the owner of this unpretentious two-roomed dwelling remained anonymous in the 1851 advertisement offering the structure for sale, along with sixteen acres of vineyard, piggeries, and a stockyard, located between Tucker's Road and Manchester Street.

In 1851 the "Brighton Estate" was the greatest grape producing locality in Victoria with an industry that began when Henry Moor, a solicitor, introduced the vine with plants brought from the Camdem Estate in NSW in early 1848, to establish a five-acre vineyard on South Road. Moor's success at grape production was so marked that after three years had passed and his first fruit appeared, there was a tendency for the country from the bayside to East Boundary Road and from South to North Roads to become dotted with vineyards whilst trellised vines became the fashionable insulation that shielded the outer walls of homes from the sun.

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By the mid 1850s the land between Port Phillip Bay and East Boundary Road was yielding more grapes a year than any other area in Australia, until the neighboring Parish of Prahran got busy and excelled the efforts of the Parish of Moorabbin. Jointly however, Moorabbin and Prahran in 1856 produced 157,000 pounds of grapes between them, representing two-thirds of Victoria's output for the year, and at a time when this state was the major grape producer in Australia.

A few years after the founding of Cheltenham in 1852, William Bruton, (an early resident), recorded that this locality was *also* rich with vineyards; he could remember the vines being wiped out, but could not recall the name of the disease, or insect responsible.

Whatever the cause, the vineyard era provided table grapes, raisins, and wines to meet the mounting needs of an expanding gold rush population. The vineyard era lasted long enough to see the "gold fever" go into decline, as the prospector moved out of the goldfields, and the mining companies moved in.

After six very successful years of growing grapes, and making enough wine to satisfy the distribution needs of the "Brighton Brewery", the vines began to decline and the Parish of Moorabbin reverted to being largely a market gardening locality, .

Although figures suggest that annual wine production rose above the two hundred gallons mark at it's peak in 1855, no records are known to exist for 1858. Perhaps the drop in manufacture to 15 1/2 gallons, (as recorded in 1857), was a sad enough figure to put the one surviving vigneron out of business.

Author: Tom Sheehy
February 1979
