

GRAPEVINE CUTTINGS (October 1999)

By Rob Upson

KNIPE'S CASTLE

One of the early pioneers of photography in Australia was Nicholas John Caire (1837 - 1918). He emigrated with his parents from Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands, to Adelaide in about 1860. He took up his childhood passion for photography as a profession and in 1874 came to Bendigo and set up a studio in View Street.

Some of the many panoramic photographs he took of Bendigo and the goldfields were from the tower of St. Paul's church in Myers Street. One view looking westwards shows a strange looking building in the distance near the top end of View St. This large edifice, no longer standing, was known as **Knipe's Castle**, (or Knipe's Folly as it was sometimes called).

In 1860, John Hanlon Knipe purchased the block of land fronting Boundary St. (now called Valentine St.) between Forest and Acacia streets, for the sum of 120. In 1861, Knipe borrowed 400 from a California Gully publican in order to build on the land. Later that same year he borrowed another 400, this time from a California Gully quartz miner.

The Bendigo Advertiser of Nov. 6, 1861, advises "*Mr J.H. Knipe is, we see, building a residence on the Ironbark Ranges, which from its size and commanding appearance, looks like a Castle indeed, and he has only to machicolate it to perfect the illusion.*" Machicolate is a medieval term meaning to provide an opening, such as in a parapet, for the dropping of stones or liquids on assailants.

The Bendigo Advertiser in its Centenary of Bendigo publication in 1951 informed us that "*Knipe's Castle was that unusual dwelling on the hill in Boundary Street. It was a structure reminiscent of the Middle Ages for it was complete with bastions, turrets and battlements.....There was a rumour that Knipe's Castle was haunted.....imagination went into full play over anything that concerned this remarkable house of medieval structure.*"

John Knipe never lived in his castle because his creditors foreclosed on him and in 1862 it was auctioned to the quartz miner who had lent him some of the capital. Four years later in 1866 it was sold to Harry Leigh Atkinson, Surgeon, for 450. Mr. Atkinson was a prominent medical practitioner of the day and at some stage owned the Ravenswood Estate near Big Hill. In 1885 he sold the castle to Henry Horatio Hall, a dentist from Melbourne, for 900. In the Bendigo Advertiser of Oct. 17, 1885, Mr. Hall advertised his profession thus: '*H.H.Hall, Member British Dental Association, London. Surgeon Dentist, Pall Mall, Bendigo and 149 Collins Street East, Melbourne. Laughing Gas Administered*'.

Henry Hall, a bachelor, died at the Castle in 1924 and left the property to his

housekeeper. J.H.Curnow & Son auctioned the castle in 1925 and the advertisement regarding the sale in part read - "*That well known property 'The Castle', Boundary St., 2-storied brick building divided into two residences, each containing six large and lofty rooms and several good brick outbuildings.*" Other descriptions of the time included "*....a dungeon and little turreted lodges finish this remarkable place, the whole effect of bastions and battlements being that of a baronial fortress.*"

The Castle was purchased by a Mrs Jeanette Warren of Melbourne for 600 and on her death it was auctioned for removal in 1925 and demolished soon after. A Mr C.L.Stillwell bought the now vacant land in 1929 and built a *spacious modern home*. Knipe's Castle that had been a prominent Bendigo landmark for over 60 years had given way to 'progress' and was no more.

The story of John Hanlon Knipe will have to wait for another episode.

Reference - The Bendigo Advertiser and Mrs Edith Lunn