

# GRAPEVINE CUTTINGS (February 2001)

By Rob Upson

## FEDERATION CELEBRATIONS – SYDNEY-1901

Some of you may have witnessed the TV coverage of Sydney's Centenary of Federation Parade on New Year's Day. One hundred years ago, in celebration of Federation, there was, through the streets of Sydney, a pageant and procession followed by the swearing-in of the first Federal Cabinet.

The Bendigo Advertiser, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1901, had significant press coverage of this event. It was humid and unsettled weather that greeted New Year's Day, 1901, as the procession assembled on the Domain at 10 am. Representatives of Public Institutions and Local Govt., Parliamentarians, Church dignitaries, Consuls, Military and Naval forces all formed part of the procession. Various overseas visitors were invited to participate as well as regiments from the Indian Army, the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers, the Royal Household Cavalry and the Royal Engineers. The first Governor General, Lord Hopetoun, in his state carriage, was escorted by horses and riders dressed in state liveries.

Buildings had been gaily decorated with flags and banners and were brightly lit with lights at night. Along the route the procession passed through a number of elaborately decorated arches proclaiming greetings from various countries and organizations. These were the Commonwealth Arch, Sydney Citizen's Arch, Melbourne Arch, American Arch, German Arch, French Arch, Military Arch, Colonnade Arch, Floral Arch, Wheat Arch, Wool Arch and the Coal Arch. These arches were each described in the Addy's report and some were illustrated with a simple sketch. (Apparently some funds were allocated to erect a similar series of arches for this year's centenary procession, but the organisers were concerned by the possibility of parts of an arch falling apart thus producing litigation. Hence, no arches.)

Back to 1901. The procession on reaching the Post Office, was the signal for the bells to ring out together with the bells from the Town Hall, Churches and Cathedrals. Numerous stands had been erected along the route for the thousands of spectators and the procession, about 2 miles long, took about an hour to pass a given point. Thousands more were waiting in Centennial Park forming a vast amphitheatre overlooking the pavilion where the swearing-in ceremony was to take place.

The Governor General's arrival at the pavilion was announced by a 19-gun salute. The clerk of the South Australian Parliament read the proclamation, letters patent and the Governor General's commission. The oath of office was then taken by Lord Hopetoun followed by a 21-gun salute. The proclamation by the G.G. announcing the formation of the Federal Cabinet by Mr. Edmund Barton Q.C. was then read by Archbishop Smith, Primate of Australia. The ministry then took their oaths and assumed their various offices. Congratulatory messages from Queen Victoria and the British Govt. were then read. Another 19-gun salute was followed by more congratulatory messages from other countries and States.

A state banquet was held in the Town Hall in the evening chaired by the Lieut-Governor, Sir Frederick Darley, Chief Justice of N.S.W. Apparently Lord Hopetoun was too worn out by the day's proceedings to attend. The Addy of 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. 1901 also reported that the Lieut-Governor had received a cablegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies stating that the Queen had been pleased to confer a Knight Bachelor's rank on Dr. John Quick, doubtless for the important role he played in framing the Federal Constitution.

The Addy of 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. 1901 also reported Federation celebrations from other places. In Melbourne, for instance, the day was treated as a normal New Year holiday with the Government doing very little to mark the occasion. A few Govt. and other buildings were decorated. At noon the Cathedral bells began to peal and continued at intervals throughout the rest of the day and a salute of 101 guns was fired from the Domain Battery. Celebration reports from Ballarat, Deniliquin and Echuca were more enthusiastic although little mention was made of Bendigo.

*“Federation .....was hailed with joyful tidings by the Echuca and Moama citizens. Perhaps with the exception of Albury, no other town in Victoria realised Federation in the same sense as Echuca did today, because it being a large border town, our residents when crossing the river, are bailed by Customs Officers to ascertain if they are in possession of dutiable goods. Before very long these drawbacks will be abolished and the folks on either side of the river will be able to mingle with each other with perfect freedom.”*

It’s hard to imagine, but before Federation, each of our States or Colonies was almost like a separate country. If you wish to read more about the Federation Story, then the Bendigo Advertiser is publishing a series of supplements, each Friday for ten weeks. The first supplement commenced on the 29<sup>th</sup> December 2000.