

JOHN KITCHEN 1799-1891

John Kitchen was a tough, dogmatic and extremely religious man. Born in an illiterate era, he taught himself to read, write and keep books – an asset while running a grocery shop in the Berkshire market town of Wallingford. After the depression of the 1840s, John Kitchen left England with his sons in 1855 to try their luck on the Australian goldfields.

Once in Australia, he was joined by his other son, John Ambrose Kitchen, who had arrived in Australia in 1854.

In 1856 John and his sons rented a cottage in what is today South Melbourne and began making candles. In 1859 they moved to the permanent Port Melbourne site. The first legal partnership was entered into in November of 1860 and the signboard JOHN KITCHEN & SONS was erected.

In 1870 the Candle King (as John was known) retired. John Kitchen passed away in 1891 at the age of ninety-two.