

**DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT OF PORT
PHILLIP; BEING A HISTORY OF THE
COUNTRY NOW
CALLED VICTORIA, UP TO THE ARRIVAL
OF MR. SUPERINTENDENT LATROBE, IN
OCTOBER, 1839**

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Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip; Being a History of the Country Now Called Victoria, up to the Arrival of Mr. Superintendent Latrobe, in October, 1839 by James Bonwick

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JAMES BONWICK

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A HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY NOW CALLED VICTORIA,

UP TO THE

ARRIVAL OF MR. SUPERINTENDENT LATROBE, IN OCTOBER, 1836.

By JAMES BONWICK;

AUTHOR OF

GEOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND; GRAMMAR FOR
AUSTRALIAN YOUTH, &c., &c.; AND COMPILER OF THE
GEOLOGICAL MAP OF VICTORIA.

REVISED, AT REQUEST, BY W. WESTGARTH, ESQ.,

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P R E F A C E .

In presenting the first volume of a series on Australian Colonial History, the Author would claim the kind indulgence of the reader. The compilation of such a work was one of considerable difficulty. In the dearth of written authorities the materials had to be principally procured from oral testimony. Conscious of the liability to error in dependence upon such evidence, intelligent, conscientious and disinterested as it may be—collected from persons of both sexes, and of various stations and employments—he would claim forbearance for inadvertencies, and solicit corrections of mis-statements.

A residence of only fifteen years in these Colonies prevented the Author speaking from personal experience of the events of this present history; but an esteemed friendship with some of the Fathers of the Settlement, many years reading and study of facts connected with Port Phillip progress, together with a close and lengthened investigation of Early Times amidst the scenes about which he writes, have given him considerable advantages in the preparation of this book. The historian who does not personally figure in the story he describes may be supposed to be the more free from prejudice and bias.

The writer sincerely avows his honest desire to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, in the spirit of Christian candour and charity. In the discharge of such a duty he may occasionally appear to pass over the threshold of private life; but it must be remembered that the early history of an infant Colony embraces no narrative of bloody battles, or political contests, but is little more than a family record—men of humble name being the heroes of the drama.

The present work brings us down to the appointment of Mr. Latrobe as Superintendent, October 1st, 1839. At some early opportunity the second volume will be published, detailing the great prosperity and sudden decline of the youthful settlement,—the GOOD AND BAD TIMES OF PORT PHILLIP.

It was intended to have included a notice of the Aborigines in this volume; but so interesting a subject was found too extensive for so limited a space. Within a month, a Sketch of the Natives will appear, under the title of "The Wild White Man, and his Port Phillip Black Friends."

Most gratefully would the Author acknowledge the assistance of Old Colonists, the courtesy of Mr. Ridgeway of the Council Library, and the kindness of Mr. Westgarth in revising the work.

BOROONDARA BOARDING SCHOOL, NEAR MELBOURNE,
May 12th, 1856.

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CHAPTER I.

DISCOVERY OF PORT PHILLIP.

On April 18, 1770, a vessel was straying through an unknown ocean. Impelled by a love of adventure and ambition for discovery, Captain Cook had dared the dangers of a long and novel voyage. He had visited the cannibal home of the Maories, and blessed it with new and nutritious articles of food. Sailing westward from New Zealand, the cry of "Land, land," arose on the above mentioned day. The fortunate man whose eye first rested on the shore received the honor of having the spot named after him. Point Hicks was the first land sighted by the English in Eastern Australia. It lay westward of Cape Howe, and, therefore, within the territory of Port Phillip, now Victoria.

Rounding Cape Howe, our navigator followed the coast, entered Botany Bay, named Port Jackson, reached Cape York, and took possession of the country in the name of his Sovereign George III., as the land of NEW SOUTH WALES. Upon his return home he strongly recommended the formation of a colony at Botany Bay. The government had lost the plantations of America to which they had heretofore shipped their convicts, and sold them to the settlers; they listened, then, to the tale of landscape beauty, delicious climate, prospective empire, and a distant world, and resolved upon a penal settlement on the New Holland shore.

Captain Arthur Phillip arrived at Botany Bay on January 18th., 1788. The "*Sirius*" and "*Supply*" brought 212 soldiers, 558 male prisoners, 228 female prisoners, 28 free married women, and 17 children. Preference being given to Port Jackson, the party removed thither four days after. On the lovely banks of this noble harbour a judicious site was selected for the camp, which was named after

Viscount Sydney of the Admiralty. Collins, the historian of the expedition, and afterwards the founder of both the colonies of Port Phillip and Hobart Town, thus addressed this nobleman after whom the first settlement was called: "Your benevolent mind," says he, "led you to conceive this method of redeeming many lives that might be forfeited to the offended laws; but which, being preserved, under salutary regulations, might afterwards become useful to society; and to your patriotism the plan presented a prospect of commercial and political advantage." The Government was formally established February 7th, 1788, and the colony of New South Wales declared to extend from Cape York to Cape Howe, and from the sea to the 135th degree of east longitude, nearly including the whole of the present regions of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

Although Captain Cook sighted some land westward of Cape Howe, and therefore, within our boundary, yet Mr. Bass has the honor of entering the first harbour of this colony, and of discovering the strait since called by his name. He was, according to the testimony of his friend Flinders, "a man whose ardour for discovery was not to be repressed by any obstacles, nor deterred by danger." Arriving at Sydney with the second fleet, as Surgeon of the "*Reliance*," he at once entered upon his career as an explorer. He asked for no outfit, and looked for no aid, but depended upon his own energetic will and private means. Associated with young Flinders the midshipman, he engaged the "*Tom Thumb*" boat, only eight feet in length. Accompanied by a lad, the bold sea heroes ventured out upon the ocean in November, 1795, and explored the mouth of George River, &c. In March, the following year, the trio took "*Tom Thumb*" to make fresh surveys on the coast south of Port Jackson. In December, 1797, Bass procured a whale boat, and with six men and six weeks provisions undertook the memorable voyage, which so distinguished his name in Port Phillip history.

On the 19th instant he discovered Twofold Bay, north of Cape Howe. The next day he landed on our shores at Ram's Head, and was there detained nine days by a gale. As Captain Cook had described his Point Hicks as 15 leagues west of Ram's Head, Bass went in search for it, but found nothing but an open beach 150 miles long. On January 4th, 1798, he discovered Western Port, and remained thirteen days to repair his boat. There he had great difficulty in procuring water. He named a Cape Wollamai from its resemblance to the helmet headed fish Wollamai, or Seahorse of Port

Jackson. Observing seven runaway convicts on a small island, Mr. Bass brought them to the mainland, and generously supplied them with some provisions, a kettle, fishing line and hooks, a musket, and half his stock of provisions. Unable to carry them in his boat, he gave them the direction of Sydney camp, and left them to their overland route; their two sick mates he took with him. Nothing was heard after of the others. They were, doubtless, the discoverers of the Australian Alps, in whose scrubby gullies their bones may yet be found. Mr. Bass observed, to his astonishment, that the southern coast seemed to run east and west, not dipping to the southward. At that time it was believed that Van Diemen's Land was a part of New Holland, and that a deep Bay, but no strait, lay between it and the Cape Howe country. Our boat explorer, finding the coast of our colony going westward, and noticing strong and peculiar currents, began to suspect a Strait existed there, which made the land of Tasman an island. But his provisions failed him, and most unwillingly he doubled the Promontory and returned to Sydney. This fine headland received the name of Wilson from Governor Hunter, after a London friend of Flinders, at the request of Bass. The latitude of the point was afterwards proved to be 14 miles wrong, through the rough quadrant employed.

The exploring Surgeon could not rest quietly until he had solved the Strait problem. His friend Flinders had, during his absence, accompanied Captain Francis on a trip to some islands north of Van Diemen's Land. Observing natives on the latter shore and none upon the islands, Flinders felt the more certain that Van Diemen's Land was only the continuation of the southern coast of New Holland. The arguments of Bass's Western Port discovery shook his opinion. Governor Hunter, ever interested in exploration, gave the two young voyagers the ship "*Norfolk*," 25 tons, with eight seamen, to determine the question. On December 8th, 1798, they noticed the great flood from the westward, and on the ninth a long swell from the southwest broke heavily upon the western shore of Tasman's land, as they turned round Cape Grim. Flinders thus records his experience of that day: "although it (the swell) was likely to prove troublesome and even dangerous, Mr. Bass and myself hailed it with joy and mutual congratulation, as announcing the completion of our long wished for discovery of a passage into the Southern Indian Ocean." Governor Hunter named the Strait after Bass, the discoverer, at the earnest request of Flinders. Phillip Land was not physically joined to Van

Dieman's Land; yet was it ordained by Providence to be the means of settling that island, and afterwards to be settled from that island. The reader may be anxious to know something further of the enterprising medical sailor, Bass. Leaving Sydney in a vessel for Valparaiso, he was chosen commander in the place of the insane master. Approaching the Spanish Settlements, he sought to trade with the people. The authorities forbade commercial intercourse with the English. The restless Bass sent word ashore that if they would not trade he would bombard the town. This brought about a slow and sulky barter. Watching an opportunity, the Spaniards seized Mr. Bass, and he was never heard of more. It is supposed he perished a slave in the unhealthy quicksilver mines of Chili.

The next hero of Port Phillip discovery was Lieutenant James Grant. In his voyage out from London to Sydney, he commanded H. M. little 40 ton brig, "*Lady Nelson*." He was the first to proceed along the shortened route through Bass's Strait, and had, therefore, the good fortune to be the first observer of the Northern shore, as Flinders and Bass had been of the Southern shore of that Strait. He does not appear to have approached the Australian coast until near the present western boundary of Victoria. On December 3rd, 1800, he sighted and named Cape Banks, afterwards appropriated by the French as Cape Boufflers. He then successively discovered Capes Northumberland, Bridgewater and Nelson; Portland Bay; Point Nepean; Capo Liptrap, and Rodonto Rock. In fact, he discovered all the coast from Western Port to longitude $141\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ E. Two of the Capes and the Bay were named after Dukes, Otway from a Captain, and Nepean after a Secretary to the Admiralty. He called one island after Mr. Churchill, who gave him seeds to plant in waste places for the benefit of Europeans or Savages. Grant obtained leave to return to England in October, 1801. He published a sketch of his voyage in 1803.

Now arrived the period of the discovery of the noble harbour of Port Phillip, which led to the first settlement of this colony. Governor King, of New South Wales, was desirous of ascertaining the nature of the inlet passed by Lieutenant Grant, one headland of which had been named Point Nepean. At the end of 1801, he despatched Lieutenant John Murray thither in the little government craft "*Lady Nelson*." That Officer passed the Heads and beheld a spacious basin, February 15th, 1802. Delighted with the prospect, he afterwards wrote, "the southern shores of this noble harbour in some