

ORBOST HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



P.O. BOX 284 ORBOST VIC 3888

President: Beryl Macalister
Vice President: Geoff Stevenson
Secretary: Paul Dawson
Treasurer: Paul Dawson
Museum Curators: Geoff Stevenson
Eddie Slatter
Research Secretary: John Phillips

NEWSLETTER

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A further selection of photographs from the "Croajingalong 1889 Album"





SHIPPING

(Source: Unknown)

From the time when the Imlays held the run at Orbost, goods were brought in to Marlo by boat, possibly only once a year.

Early shipping was by Carl Petersen, of Copenhagen who arrived in Melbourne in 1853 in the American ship "Akbar". In November 1875 he went to the Snowy River with a gang of about forty men to strip wattle-bark for Europe. He was the first man to open up that industry by taking schooners to the Snowy River. The bark was boated down to the mouth where he had sheds. The river mouth was wide and there was a channel almost up to Ross's leaving a small island. The sheds were on the ocean side of this (at the slips). He also had a steamer trading in and out of the Snowy.

When commercial agriculture was developing on the Snowy flats, the Snowy was the chief road along which goods passed to the ships waiting to take them to Melbourne and the markets. In the very early days, before the river was snagged, the loaded barges were poled downstream, gondolier fashion. In the 1870's Captain Nailer and Roadknight arranged for the first landing to be built. George Rathbon and R P Cameron built it.

The snaggers played an important part in making the river free for transport. By 1880 Captain Collins, R McNair engineer, J McNair and the two Winchesters were at work with a punt on the Snowy and Brodribb. Mr. Jim Winchester took charge soon after. Early snaggers were Johnston, J Renton, Nat Lynch, John Drew, Hatton, J Scott and Harry Wilkinson. The system used was to use a tree on the river bank as a lever and with heavy manila ropes, slowly to haul the snags out. They were piled up around a tree and burned when dry. The snaggers lived in a row of cottages in Snaggers' Lane.

The Orbost Shipping Company was founded in 1880 and remained in existence till 1915. Its secretary was J J Thompson and followed later by Henry James. The schooner "Orbost" built by Erikson at Paynesville and the ketch "Endeavour" built by Samuel Richardson at Tabbara, were two early vessels owned by the company. In 1885 the small schooner "Orbost" plied from Marlo to Melbourne, skippered by Captain Martimer. Because of the shallow channel into Marlo, caused by a sand bar at the Snowy entrance, these vessels were designed to draw only 4-5 feet of water, and with a capacity of 250-300 four bushel bags of maize, the little craft rode very low in the water when fully loaded. The "Endeavour" was subsequently cut in half and lengthened to increase its capacity to 450 four bushel bags.

Leaving Little Dock in Melbourne at noon on a Saturday, with general cargo, the vessels, given a fair wind and tide, would reach Marlo on Monday morning. Frequently a surprise westerly would force the craft as far east as Gabo Island and Eden. After waiting to catch a breeze to Marlo, the vessels could be blown off-course to Cunninghame. Bad weather could cause an alteration in the schedule as the "Orbost" and the "Endeavour" sheltered in the lee of

Wilson's Promontory. Melbourne agents for the Snowy River Co. were William Cowper & Sons.

Quite some process was involved in getting the maize to Marlo. Along the banks of the river, upstream as far as Pumpkin Point (Bete Bolong) wooden shutes were constructed. The bags of maize were shot down into the waiting barges then the barges were towed to Marlo. The final stage in the fairly arduous task was transshipping the bags to the vessels. Sometimes pigs traveled in built up pens on the hatches.

To dispense with the laborious task of poling the barges, the twin paddle steamer "Curlip" was built on the Tabbara slips by Samuel Richardson and his sons in 1891. Built of sturdy mahogany, the "Curlip" proved a veritable warhorse. The ten tonner performed a variety of tasks; towing barges (sometimes four astern with 300 bags apiece); towing schooners and ketches into Marlo and tugging stranded vessels from the sandbar at the entrance. On Sunday, she carried parties of picnickers to Marlo. For seven years A & R P Cameron, ran the paddle steamer "Cheviot" on the Snowy in opposition but they sold out.

The turn of the century saw an expansion of the Marlo - Lakes Entrance service. The auxiliary ketches "Storm Bird" (Captain Fraser) and the "Sea Bird" (Captain Meln) of about 50 tons each, making about nine knots, could complete the round trip in less than one day. Both vessels had capacity of 450-500 bags of maize below the ketches, with sawn timber for deck cargo. Between 1900 and 1910 other vessels were purchased by the Snowy Shipping Co. and the "Kiora", "Wangrabelle" and "Corringle" entered the Snowy River trade with Captains Thomson and Hegarty. The great flood of 1893 completely washed away the storages at Marlo.

Among the vessels which visited Marlo were the "Gippsland", "Wellington", "Hall Caine", the "Bruthen", the "Enterprise", the "Waratah", "Alma", "Nell", "Victoria" and "Mariner". The "Glengarry" was lost on the bar at Marlo when she had a building on board for the Orbost Post Office. The pioneer lakes paddle boat, the "Lady of the Lake", finished her useful career at the Snowy, her engine being sold to a mining company at Club Terrace and her hull utilized for carrying maize until a flood carried it out to sea. The "Orbost" was lost in a squall in the Westernport and the "Wangrabelle" was wrecked on the bar at Marlo.

The years 1910-1914 saw a gradual deterioration of trade, and in 1915 the Orbost Shipping Co. closed.