

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

No. 91 SEPTEMBER, 2012

SAMUEL JAMES LYNN

A pioneer of the Orbost district

Written by Margaret Hollands



Samuel James Lynn 1865 – 1948

Samuel James Lynn was born in 1865 in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. His father was James Lynn and his mother was Mary Jane Keith. Sam, as he was known, was the second of three brothers, his older brother being William and his younger brother was John Wilson Lynn. Farming was difficult in Northern Ireland when these boys were growing up and William and Sam decided that there might be better prospects in the colonies. William emigrated to Timaru, New Zealand while Sam chose Australia.

Sam left his home in Coleraine in 1883 at the age of 17. Many years later, in 1938, he wrote to his granddaughter, Lynn Brown, in response to a birthday letter from her. He described his journey to Australia thus:-

“You said you would like to know what boat I came out in. Well I came out the first time in June 1883 in a ship called the “Potosi”. She was about 4000 tons laden. She was a three master and carried three main sails on each mast besides a jib and foresail. She also had engines which helped her on when there was not much wind.

But we had too much wind coming round the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, and it tore all the sails to pieces. It was very rough and the deck was all flooded. I came out third class and

the food was very poor. I used to help the cook and I got a bit extra. There were no waiters. The food was put at the end of long tables and everyone helped themselves. When they cleared the things off the table, they would throw a bucket of hot water along it and then sweep it down with a broom. The soup would sometimes have dead maggots floating in it and we would have to pick them out with our spoons. But there was always a sack of dog biscuits that we could help ourselves to.”

Having survived this hazardous journey Samuel Lynn continues with his story:-

“Australia looked to be all trees as soon as I left Melbourne and I was wondering when I would come to some ploughed land. The train only came as far as Sale and I had to take the Cobb and Co. coach to Bairnsdale and then on to Bruthen. There were about ten people huddled up in the coach and we changed horses about every ten miles. The road was very rough and we hit the roof more than once. After it got dark the coach ran on top of a stump and nearly capsized. The driver took the leaders off to pull the coach back and gave me the reins of the pullers to hold. We eventually got it off and reached our destination at half past two in the morning. No one was sorry to get there.”

There is another story that is repeated in various forms by members of Sam’s family.

When going through his small amount of luggage, he pulled out his waistcoat and thinking that it seemed heavy, he examined it closely. He discovered 16 sovereigns sewn in the lining, no doubt put there by his mother.

Sam looked for a job in East Gippsland and approached a Mr Cunninghame who had a farm at Lakes Entrance. Mr Cunninghame asked Sam if he could use a scythe and he replied that he could, as that was the only method of harvesting in Ireland. He secured the job at ten shillings per week. Sam made friends with a Mr John Farquhar who was breaking in horses at Lakes Entrance. John Farquhar took him up to Bruthen and it was there on a subsequent trip that he met Elizabeth Warren who later became his wife.

After leaving Lakes Entrance, Sam made his way to Orbost and worked for Charles Brown and later still for Mr. Hugh Cameron (Alister Cameron’s father). Sam worked hard and saved his money. When the land boom came, having a natural flair for stock, he bought his first cattle in the Bairnsdale saleyards and rented land to graze them.

In 1889 he married Elizabeth Warren and their first home was on the banks of the Snowy River in a house built by Sam.

There was a very big flood in the Snowy



**"Gateside" the Lynn family home near Coleraine in Northern Ireland.
Photo taken in 1995**

River in 1893 and Sam sent his wife and two small children in the wagon to higher ground. As the water continued to rise, he lashed a large barrel up a big gum tree and stayed in

this barrel overnight, hence the name Lynn's Gulch.

Anyone who has seen a big flood in the Snowy would appreciate what a terrifying experience this would have been.



ABOVE: The Lynn family. Back row from left: Rene Rodwell, Keith Lynn (they married in 1920), Jack Blaikie, Ethel Lynn (they were engaged but did not marry), Jim Lynn, his wife Florence. Front row: Sam Lynn, Jack Lynn, Elizabeth Lynn. Insert: Mary Lynn who was at Presbyterian Ladies College.



**Fairleigh", Lynn family home at Jarrahmond.
Photo taken 2012.**

In the same year, Sam bought the property "Fairleigh" (at Jarrahmond). The land was covered with huge gum trees and tangled vines which had to be cleared with

an axe and then ploughed with a small plough pulled by one horse. Then the seed was scattered by hand and when the first shoots appeared the cockatoos moved in.



Orbost Shire Council 1907, Sam Lynn front left

Over the years, Sam Lynn acquired more property throughout the district and bred Clydesdale horses and fattened about 600 cattle. He was in great demand as a judge of both cattle and horses at agricultural shows in Victoria and interstate. He was a shire councillor for 30 years and president several times. He took a great interest in the sporting clubs of the town and played cricket until late in life. He was goal umpire for the local football team for many years, judged for the Orbost Racing Club and was the first president of the Orbost Bowls Club. He was also a member of the first municipal band.

Sam and Elizabeth had five children: Jim, Ethel, Keith, Mary and Jack. In 1920, Sam and Elizabeth moved to "Lorraine", their house in Reed St. and their son Keith took over "Fairleigh". Elizabeth died in 1936. Later, Sam took a trip to Ireland and met his second wife,



Maize planter

Mary whom he brought to Orbost with her daughter Cora. Sam died in 1948 after a lifetime of service to the community.

Sam and Elizabeth had 14 grandchildren and numerous great grandchildren. At a family reunion held in Orbost on October 1st 1989, there were over 100 of their descendants present who were justly proud of these wonderful pioneers of the Orbost district.