

HIRAM AKERS was born in Penkridge (near Birmingham) UK in 1823 and did his schooling there. His father and grandfather were Tailors and respected citizens of the town.

He arrived in Hobart in 1841 at the young age of 18 after a three month journey in a sailing ship, having been convicted of stealing a pair of trousers in Wolverhampton in 1840. He had been sentenced to transportation to Tasmania for 10 years. His occupation was then a Shoemaker.

He was confined for a short time in Probationary Stations near work sites in the North West area (near Stanley) for less than 2 years working on building roads and bridges. He was released to work for farmers on normal wages until he served his 10 years.

Shortly after receiving his pardon, he married Elizabeth Medwin, the daughter of the first settler in NW Tasmania and had one daughter. His occupation was then a farmer. Hiram & Elizabeth came to Melbourne in 1851 probably to join the gold rush but tragedy struck, and Elizabeth died in Melbourne that year leaving Hiram with a 2 year old baby to care for.

Melbourne then was a town of around 29,000 and was a wild place due to the influx of visitors from all over the World chasing gold, plus the riotous behaviour of the miners who, when striking it rich, came to Melbourne to celebrate.

Fortunately Hiram was able to re-marry a young lady Thomasine Cornish (born in St Columb Major, Cornwall) who had not arrived long in Melbourne with her sister, with the intention of finding work which was plentiful in the Colony.

In 1852, Hiram and Thomasine summoned up the courage and with baby Sophia Matilda they left Melbourne by horse and dray and headed for the goldfields some 180k away, a very formidable journey in those days.

They settled in Fryerstown (near Castlemaine) initially where two more children were born. The town was situated in the then very rich alluvial goldfields that were discovered in central Victoria in 1851 that became a world wide gold rush. They went then to Daylesford for a short time where another child was born.

The living conditions in these locations were primitive with no Hospitals or Doctors. Food and water were scarce and they would have resided in tents most of the time.

It is hard to imagine the hardship they suffered in this remote and untamed land but to their credit they soldiered on and eventually arrived at the gold mining town of Tarnagulla (near Bendigo) in 1857 where they decided to put down their roots. Another five children were born in the town.

In all, they raised nine children. What a Woman ! And to think there were no premature deaths recorded compared to the four deaths of Hiram's young siblings back in England during this time.

Hiram eventually became a farmer and a model citizen with his photograph still hanging in the Tarnagulla Hall to this day. A great accomplishment considering the most difficult start he had in life as a convict.

What amazes me the most is, how two people from the other side of the World with no exposure to the harsh reality of life in an unexplored land, were able to survive and lead a long and happy family life. What tenacity they must have had which shows again what can be achieved through persistence and plain hard work. A great motto of the late Sir Reg Ansett.

Although neither of them rose to great heights in achievements for the town, the successful accomplishment of raising nine children speaks for itself.

Des Akers (great grandson)

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