

THE BLUE MOUNTAIN ECHO

News of the Mountains District

The Pass of Victoria Centenary

GREAT WORK OF A GREAT MAN

TRIBUTE TO SIR THOMAS LIVINGSTON
MITCHELL ON THE SCENE OF HIS
ACHIEVEMENT

Mt. Victoria Centenary Committee's Fine
Work

The great majority of Australians enter into their heritage of a free and bounteous land with little thought to the story of its early development, the price paid in human suffering, and the courage, endurance, and perseverance of the early explorers and pioneers. Our brief history affords many stories of the indomitable will of these great men: their struggles and hardships, failures and victories, not the least of which concerns the conquest of our own far-famed Blue Mountains, without which the State would never have been a reality.

When Blaxland, Lawson, and Wentworth conquered the trackless heights and depths of the mountain fastness and, from a rocky eminence, glimpsed the Promised Land of the West, they opened up for development the vast inland areas of New South Wales.

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It was, however, with another conquest — the building of the Pass of Victoria, nearly 20 years later, by Surveyor-General Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell, which was the objective of Saturday's interesting ceremony. Faced with the realities of to-day it is hard to visualise the difficulties of construction encountered just 100 years ago, but the fact remains that the road builded in those early days is still the great highway to the West.

The memorial perpetuates the name of a man associated with a great work, with all its historical associations, and the great part it played in furthering the development of the inland plains of the State. It is the first memorial erected to Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell in N.S.W.

To the foresight and zeal of the Mt. Victoria Centenary Committee the ceremony was due and, by its efforts, the committee has earned the thanks of the community, notwithstanding the lack of support that was encountered.

Forty members of the Royal Historical Society were present.

The idea of celebrating the centenary of the Pass of Victoria was first conceived by Cr. Mathews, at Mt. Victoria, and in May of last year a committee was formed with Cr. W. P. Cripps (chairman), Cr. W. P. Mathews (treasurer) and Mr. H. C. Dalziel (hon. secretary). A decision was made to circularise Mountain residents for funds towards the erection of a suitable memorial to Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and to create interest in the event generally. The public purse-strings remained securely tied, however, and the committee met with one disappointment after another. Notwithstanding this adversity, it zealously continued its activities, determined that ways and means must be found to carry its plan to a successful conclusion. The Royal Historical Society was appealed to for authentic information and assistance and responded generously, also donating the marble inscription-plate affixed to the obelisk. Mr. Blackwood, the Katoomba architect gave valuable assistance by preparing the plans.

The committee's next difficulty concerned the acquisition of a suitable site. The top of the Pass was favoured but the land was too costly. The Sights Reserve Trust came to the rescue by offering Mitchell's Ridge, which was accepted. On Mr. Cripps resignation from the presidency, Cr. Percy Wilson, of B.M. Shire, was prevailed upon to fill the vacancy. His Council donated £50 and the Trustees followed with £40, which greatly relieved the financial position and encouraged the committee to continue its efforts. Council then set about supervising the erection of the obelisk, which will be completed when additional funds are available. It will tower skywards

be completed when additional funds are available. It will tower skywards for 30ft and will have an electric beacon on top, which will be visible for many miles from all points of the compass. The cost in stone was estimated at £700, and in synthetic stone at £250, but, owing to the difficulty of procuring the necessary funds it is probable that the cheaper scheme will be adopted.

THE UNVEILING CEREMONY

Mitchell's Ridge, a spur bordering the great Kanimba Valley, and commanding an extensive panorama, presented an animated appearance when President Percy Wilson opened the proceedings. Included in the gathering were Mr. G. B. F. Mann and Mr. L. F. Mann, grandsons of Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell, which provided an interesting personal note to the ceremony. Others present were Mr. O. E. Friend (President), Mr. K. R. Cramp (hon. sec.) and approximately forty other members of the Royal Historical Society; Mr. Lamble, Director of the Government Tourist Bureau; Hon. J. Jackson, M.L.A., Minister for Local Government; Mr. J. N. Lawson, M.H.R. (Macquarie), Mr. Hamilton Knight, M.L.A. (Hartley), formerly member for this dis-

trict; Mr. Gregory, Secretary and Publicity Officer of the N.R.M.A.; and representatives of Katoomba, Lithgow, and Blackheath Municipal Councils, Urban Area Committees, etc.

"Standing at this spot, where one can view the magnitude and magnificence of the hills and valleys, fills one with awe and reverence for what has transpired during the past century," declared President Percy Wilson. "The discovery of a coun-

century, secured President Percy Wilson. "The discovery of a country does not count so much as its development, but this country has been developed upon the finest traditions of nationhood. Men of ability and loyalty had made great sacrifices in the cause of their country, and when the Governor had called for volunteers to cross the forbidding ranges, solid, capable, enduring men came forward to undertake the task. How they accomplished it is already known. Later Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell was sent to survey the road and cut the pass down the mountain side. It looks easy enough now, but there was a mountain there then. Mitchell was undaunted; he removed the mountain,

"After 100 years it is still the best track they could get. The Main Roads Board had decided to change the route and had bulldozed the new Victoria Pass (Berghofer's Pass). After a few years, however, the B.M. Shire had asked that the new road be taken off its hands and a return made to Mitchell's Pass, which was the greatest tribute that could be paid to the skill of the man who made it.

"Shakespeare had written: 'The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones,' but in this case the good work of Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell lived after him.

"It was due to a handful of citizens of Mount Victoria that the centenary scheme had been kept alive. The appeal for funds had not been what they should, but then it was recognised times were not what they should be. Appeal for Government assistance had proved unavailing. It is not a Mt. Victoria matter, but a national question," concluded the speaker. "It concerns the things which nations take a pride in, and we must not let it rest until the obelisk is completed."

Cr. W. P. Mathews (President of the Reserves Trust), engaged in the business of transporting tourists which necessitated the continual passing of the inscription which indicated the road was opened in 1832, became impressed with the necessity of perpetuating the work of Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and determined that a ceremony of importance should mark the centenary of his achievement. In outlining the history of the centenary committee, and the many obstacles en-

countered, he paid a graceful tribute to the efforts of Cr. Percy Wilson. "It is a matter of regret," he added, "that thousands of school children are not present here to-day, to appreciate what the early pioneers had accomplished. The Minister for Education had been informed of the ceremony with the hope that a large number of children would attend. The Government had only given a limited amount of money for the upkeep of reserves, but there is more than tracks and lookouts which require attention," he said.

"Mount Victoria is rich in places of historical interest, which it is our duty to bring before the public. I originated the centenary scheme and I am proud indeed to have been associated with the committee which made the ceremony possible."

HISTORY OF BLUE MOUNTAINS EXPLORATION

Mr. O. E. Friend, President of the Royal Historical Society, was the next speaker and before proceeding to give an historical resume of the mountains, expressed thanks on behalf of his members for the invitation to participate in the ceremony. "The Blue Mountains were originally known as the Carmanthen Hills," declared the speaker, "and were so named by Governor Philip. When they got the name of the Blue Mountains, we do not know. As far back as January, 1789, Capt. Watkin-Tench, of the Marines, and Mr. Ardnell had penetrated as far as Emu Plains and discovered a river, which they described as nearly as wide as the Thames at Putney. It was named by the Governor, Nepean. The following December Lieutenant Dawes was despatched with a view to reaching the Mountains and took rations for himself and party for 10 days and penetrated some nine miles over the mountains. In 1794 Quarter Master Hacking, of the Sirius, and others, after 10 days reached 20 miles further and had to return. In 1796 Bass and a small party of picked men, after 15 days, returned and declared any crossing impassable. In 1802 a determined effort was made to cross the mountains. Ensign Francis Barralier, of the N.S.W. Corps, making the attempt. Governor King was very anxious to get a track opened over the mountains and this little party left Paramatta in November, 1802, consisting of four soldiers and five convicts, and a native Gory with a wagon and two bullocks. They reached

gon and two bullocks. They reached Nattai and tried to get up via the Wollondilly somewhere about what we now know as Yarranderrie. They found the natives very hostile and returned to their camp at Nattai on 22nd November. They started on a second expedition with five strong men and two natives, and reached as far as Christie's Creek, 15 miles from Jenolan Caves. They estimated they had travelled 147 miles from the Nepean. (We must remember Barrallier in later life erected the Nelson Monument in Trafalgar Square. He died 11th June, 1853, aged 80 years.

In 1805 Caley set out with four of the strongest men in the colony to cross the Carmanthen Mountains. He made this attempt via the Hawksbury but, like others, he also failed. In 1810 there was no settlement beyond the County of Cumberland and the River Hunter, the rest of the country being entirely shut in by the Blue Mountains.

The year 1813 being a year of



Mr. Hamilton Knight, M.L.A., (Hartley), formerly member for this district, who was present at the gathering, and supported the toast to "The Blue Mountains District."



drought, with cattle and sheep dying owing to the scarcity of grass, induced further attempts to be made. It was to Blaxland that Governor Macquarie expressed a wish that he should try and solve the

error Macquarie expressed a wish that he should try and solve the difficulty. Blaxland made every preparation and asked L. Lawson (38), of the Veteran Corps, and W. C. Wentworth, 20, son of Darcy Wentworth, to accompany him. On Tuesday, 11th May, 1813, Blaxland and party left South Creek and pushed forward as far as Glenbrook.

Ten days after leaving they found a cairn of stones erected by white people, but by whom it is not known. Some say Caley; others H. Hacking, in 1794. For many years this was known as Caley's Repulse. This little band pushed steadily on and on May 24th camped at what we now know as Blackheath, from where they saw the Kanimbla Valley, and also make mention of trouble with natives. Having reached this point they each congratulated the other and shook hands. Four days later, 28th May, grass country was seen in the beyond. This would be 17 days after leaving South Creek. It was the first time their horses had come on any decent pasturage. They were at Mt. York just near us here, on 2nd June, and on 6th June returned homeward, having satisfied themselves that they had penetrated these unknown mountains.

On 20th November, 1813, Macquarie sent Surveyor Evans to explore the country further and he also crossed the mountains. In a Government order of 12th February, 1814, Macquarie thanks Blaxland, Wentworth, and Lawson, and grants Evans 1000 acres in Tasmania, or as it was then known, Van Dieman's Land. Soon after Evans returned William Cox, of Clarendon, Windsor, was asked by the Governor if he could undertake the building of a road over the mountains. Instead of "road" we should say track, but he was so well supplied with convict labour that he accomplished this great work of building the first track over in six months. Mrs. Cox was the first white woman to cross the mountains. Cox received a grant of Hereford, on the Bathurst Plains, 21st January, 1815, as a reward.

On 28th April, 1815, Governor Macquarie drove over the road to Bathurst, and on 7th May fixed the site for the town of Bathurst. We learn he returned from Bathurst to Sydney in nine days. Lawson became the first commandant of Bathurst and died at Veteran Hall in 1850.

The first land grant in the Bathurst district, 1000 acres, was made to Lt.-Colonel Sir Maurice O'Connell of the 59th Regiment.

to Lt.-Colonel Sir Maurice O'Connell, of the 73rd Regiment, presented to him when he married Governor Bligh's daughter, Mrs. Putland, William Lea, a name so well-known to us, was the first to take sheep across the mountains in 1816. This I think deals with the earlier stage of this wonderful road.

Following the visit to Bathurst by Governor Sir Richard Burke in 1832, he sent for Surveyor-General Sir Thomas Mitchell, and after discussing the matter, instructed him to make all necessary arrangements to make a good road over the mountains, and to scientifically construct bridges, etc. We all know how Major Mitchell responded and the wonderful road he built. This, of course, follows Cox's early road, but deviates in many places, such as where we now are. Cox's road being I understand, a mile from this present spot. It is certainly wonderful to think that many of the bridges built by David Lennox, under Mitchell; still survive to-day and carry the traffic.

The old track made by Cox practically followed on Blaxland's line. Sir Thomas Mitchell carried out his great and wonderful work and, at its time, was considered one of the wonders of the world. This great work certainly led to the opening up of the golden west.

To-day so many of us cross up and down these mountains, with no thought of the past. We just think we are on a good road; it is a pity we do not stop to think for a minute of the wonderful work that was done by Mitchell and Cox and others. It was a tremendous task to contemplate building a road over the mountains, and the work done was a credit from Mitchell downwards to his convict servants.

Mr. K. R. Cramp (Hon. Secretary Royal Historical Society) supported his president by recounting many additional points of historical interest, dealing more particularly with the life of Mitchell. He struck a humorous note throughout his discourse. "It is pleasing to see a sense of historical value developing in N.S.W.," he remarked. "Sentiment means a lot to the community; it is soul-preserving, prevents conservatism and the tendency to become too practical. The construction of the first road to the West (101 miles) was accomplished by 28 men in a few months—a remarkable achievement. For speediness it beat the Mains Road Board hollow, but we must not say anything about the quality of the work. It was often necessary to tie a tree on to the back of the waggon when descending on the western side. Sir Thomas Mitchell had a splendid military re-

ing on the western side. Sir Thomas Mitchell had a splendid military record before coming to Australia and had fought under the Duke of Wellington. He wore a medal with five clasps, signifying the battles in which he had taken part. It was Mitchell who said, 'I hope Australia will be thoroughly English for thousands of years.'

Hon. J. Jackson, M.L.A., was then called upon to unveil the memorial, which bears the following inscription:—

PASS OF VICTORIA

Constructed under the direction of Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell, Surveyor-General. Opened by Governor Richard Bourke October 23, 1832—1932.

(R.A.H.S.)

"Yesterday I saw the tomb of Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell at Camperdown cemetery; I have walked in the same lanes of Stirlingshire, and to-day I stand on the scene of his achievement," said the Hon. Minister for Local Government. "We cannot help feeling broader in our outlook as we gaze across these wonderful hills and contemplate the doings of 100 years ago. The road constructed by this great man was really the first trafficable road to the West, and was one of the most remarkable engineering achievements in the history of Australia. One purpose served by memorials is to spur us to greater efforts on behalf of our country, and to teach boys and girls the history and traditions which matter so much to the race. Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell was a man of great determination, and contemp-

orary history recalls him as singularly rich in industry and ability. I am reminded of Banjo Patterson's words;—

"Our fathers came of roving stock
That could not fixed abide,"
which spirit found expression in the desire to push further West, Mitchell permitted no obstacle to deter him in making the western road."





Hon. J. Jackson, M.L.A., Minister for Local Government, who performed the unveiling ceremony.



said Mr. Jackson in conclusion, "and to-day, 100 years later, we are reaping the benefits of his never-to-be-forgotten work."

Mr. Dalzell presented Mr Jackson with a book of views of Mount Victoria and district, and little Gloria Wilson presented Mrs Jackson with a bouquet.

Votes of thanks to Mr Jackson and Cr. Percy Wilson (chairman), concluded the function at the memorial and an adjournment was made to the Imperial Hotel, where afternoon tea was served and several toasts honoured.

NOTES.

Katoomba Council was represented by Aldermen Benson, Bailey, and Maling, and Mr. F. C. Taylor (Town Clerk). Digger H. J. Elliott represented the Katoomba-Leura Sub-Branch R.S. & S.I.L.A.

Ten prettily frocked little maidens — Marie Ireland, Sheila Smithson, Nina Taylor, Ella Taylor, Ellen Guy, Audrey Dean, Milda Warner, Nellie Martin, Pauline Neave, and Mary Clarke — raised a considerable sum of money by the sale of Centenary commemoration buttons. They were dressed in Early Victorian costumes which gave quite a picturesque touch to the gathering.

Mt. Victoria streets were gaily dressed with bunting, which was loaned by Katoomba and Blackheath Municipal Councils.

Mrs Deprose conducted a refreshment stall on Mitchell's Ridge. 10 per cent of the proceeds were donated to the B.M.D.A.M. Hospital.

Mr. J. Preston, of Hartley Vale, had two large telescopes on the ridge—a service largely availed of by visitors. Mr Preston has made an extraordinary recovery from a fractured spine, which he sustained in an accident at Brown's Gap last year. He is not, however, able to do any work of a laborious nature.

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B.M. Shire Council evidently believes in taking advantage of any opportunity whereby publicity might be turned to account. Its action in distributing gratis a large number of view-books of Mt. Victoria and district was an enterprising move, the benefits from which should far outweigh the costs thereby entailed.

Mr. H. E. Maiden, Shire Clerk, was a busy man at the ceremony, and was responsible in a large measure for the success of the organisation.

Mr. A. Manning, of Katoomba, took several fine photographs which, in view of their historical interest, are a most suitable memento of the ceremony.

The Hazelbrook-Lawson Band, under the baton of Bandmaster C. H. Fisher, rendered appropriate music throughout the day.

Mr. Patrick O'Brien, who left Mt Victoria 65 years ago, after 10 years residence in the district, and who had never spent a night in the town since, was an interesting personality attending the function. He remembers when stone was quarried for the present station at Mt. Victoria, by his father, from the hole below the old toll-bar, near the Mt Victoria bridge. Mr. O'Brien now lives in retirement at Bronte.

Mr. R. McGarry, 72 years of age, and who has been a resident of Hartley for 55 years, tells many interesting anecdotes of the early days. His family has been closely identified with the development of the Hartley area.

Judge Backhouse was a member of the party from the Royal Historical Society. Miss Elizabeth Betts, a great-grand-daughter of Rev. Samuel Marsden (second Chaplain in New South Wales), was also present.

A special article dealing with early history of Mt. Victoria will appear in next issue. It was contributed by Mr. Frank Walker, F.R.A.H.S., a Past President of the Society.

society.
