

CAPE HORN SAILOR

NOTABLE CAREER OF GIDLEY KING

Governor's Grandson, Land Pioneer At Tamworth

By WALTER E. BETHEL

Philip Gidley King, eldest son of Admiral Phillip Parker King, and grandson of the third Governor of N.S.W., held a naval record even against those of his hardy ancestors.

He went to sea in H.M.S. Adventure, when he was only eight years old, and continued in that ship for four years.

He was born at Parramatta in 1817, was taken to England with his parents in 1823, and there went to school.

But when, in 1826, his father was appointed by the Admiralty to the command of the Adventure and the Beagle, with instructions to survey the coasts of bleak Patagonia and Terra del Fuego, he decided to take young Philip Gidley with him and send his wife and other children to Sydney.

It was anticipated that the ships would cross from South America to Sydney; but that arrangement was countermanded later, and the ships returned to England, and Philip Gidley did not see his mother for 10 years.

The survey went on until the end of 1830, and during those four years and a half the boy had an experience that could hardly have fallen to any other so young.

The ships visited almost all the most interesting seaports on the east and west coasts of South America below latitude 10.

There were plenty of risks and hardships in the stormy regions of Patagonia and the Strait of Magellan. Men lost their lives by drowning or falls from aloft to the deck, and even the strain of the work took its toll.

Rope's End Latin

Young King had to do some school-work, too. In his autobiography he said:—

"My life on board the Adventure was a curious one. My father undertook to teach me, and certainly drilled the Eton Latin Grammar into me, aided sometimes with a short rope's end.

"It was hard lines for me to come to him with a half-learned lesson, my mind diverted by all that was going on on deck. But my talents came out, after lessons, when the surgeon brought me curious birds he had shot and which I was to skin and preserve.

"The arrangements of beetles and butterflies, too, came under my care, but we did not find many of the latter in the Strait of Magellan."

When the Adventure and the Beagle (having survived many perils of the

Strait of Magellan) returned to England again, Philip Gidley King, now a seasoned mariner of 12, was sent to a school on shore for about a year.

His father was ending his active service in the Navy; but the Beagle was ordered to resume survey work in South America, and its captain (Pittroy) offered to take young King with him as a midshipman. His father left it to him (now aged 14 years) to decide, and he elected to go.

Family in Sydney

In the Beagle he had four years of experience very similar to what he had gone through in the Adventure. One very risky duty he was called upon to perform, young as he was.

He and another young officer were sent from the Beagle on detached duty in a small schooner of nine tons, and, in her, were kept for six months, surveying the coast. At the end of that period they returned to the Beagle with their clothes worn out.

Later, in 1835, the ship sailed from South America to Sydney. And here, at long last, young King, now 18 years old, saw his parents, who had made New South Wales their permanent home, and it was decided that he should leave the Navy and settle with them.

First he assisted his father in preparing for publication his account of his voyage in the Adventure; and, that completed, he began a bush life.

To commence, he went to Gidley's, his father's small freehold near Lake George. Then he had five years' squatting experience, which included

George. Then he had five years' squatting experience, which included overlanding sheep and cattle to Melbourne at a time when he had either to find or make tracks for the stock, and when attack by blacks was an ever-present fear.

With Land Company

Then, in 1841, came a decisive change in young King's life.

He had seen much of the world and experienced many dangers, and yet he was only 23. But now he was without regular occupation. His father had become commissioner in charge of the Australian Agricultural Company's properties here, with headquarters at Port Stephens, and he appointed his son Philip to be studmaster to the company.

He took up residence at Stroud and, two years later, married Elizabeth Macarthur, daughter of Hannibal Macarthur — thus further cementing the reunion of the King-Macarthur families.

In 1849, Captain King ceased to be commissioner of the A.A. Company; but his son continued with it and was promoted to superintendence of the stock.

But when, following on the discovery of gold in 1851, the Peel River Land and Mineral Company was formed, and the A.A. Company's Peel River block was alienated to it, Philip Gidley King was obtained from the A.A. Company, and in 1853 appointed general superintendent of the new company a position he held until he died, over 50 years later.

Both these old companies exist today; and, in spite of having parted with much of their land, they are still big concerns.

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The A.A. Company, according to the report which, in 1938, was presented to the 115th annual meeting of shareholders, owned 112,000 sheep and 27,000 cattle, and coal shares valued at £128,000.

The Peel River Company's report at its 66th annual meeting in January, 1939, stated that on its properties in New South Wales, Queensland and Northern Territory it had 45,000 sheep and 25,000 cattle.

When the Polish explorer-scientist, Count Strysecki, was in New South Wales, he became a friend of the Kings at Port Stephens.

After he returned to England, he became chairman of the newly-formed Peel River Company; and it was through his favorable opinion

for many years he was a particularly active member (under the able chairmanship of the late Edmund Fosbery) of the Aborigines' Protection Board.

In 1898, when 80, this remarkable man, being also a member of the Royal Geographical Society and of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, wrote a paper on Antarctic and southern exploration, which was read before the association.

It contained much technical matter (based on his own experiences in the region of Cape Horn), and the tenor of it was advocacy of another expedition to the Antarctic, principally to fix the site of the magnetic pole in the south.

Later on, expeditions were sent, and the magnetic pole was located by Sydney's eminent scientist, Professor Sir Edgeworth David.

Had Old Records

Another interesting article King wrote was published in 1888, entitled, "A contribution to the history of the introduction of fine-wooled Sheep in Australia."

He said that in writing it, he had had "means not possessed by many of availing himself of numerous original and now long-forgotten documents."

"Some of these have been drawn, after more than three-quarters of a century, from the papers of the writer's grandfather, Governor King, and some from documents in the possession of the representatives of the family of the founder, John Macarthur, of the great wool enterprise.

"The ambition of the writer has been to preserve these memorials from destruction."

It might have been expected that the hardships at sea which Philip Gidley King had endured as a boy would

that Philip Gidley King was appointed general superintendent of that company.

In June, 1854, he wrote to King's father, speaking of the confidence the board of directors had in him, and saying: "When I undertook the chairmanship of the Peel, my condition was that your son, Philip, must be chosen as general superintendent of the Peel Estate."

Link With Darwin

The lives of world-famous Charles Darwin and of Philip Gidley King were closely associated.

When Darwin, then 23, joined H.M.S. Beagle at the end of 1831, as naturalist, he found on it young King, who (though then only 14), had already had four years' experience on the South American coast in H.M.S. Adventure.

Darwin quickly conceived a liking of King, which developed into an affection and continued until the former's death.

In an unpublished autobiography, King wrote that, at Rio Janeiro, Darwin occupied a cottage and obtained permission for King to stay with him, as the youngster had some taste for natural history.

Together they caught an immense variety of beetles and innumerable butterflies of gorgeous colors. Darwin died in 1882, King in 1904.

Another well-known man who was with King in the Beagle and took up his residence in Sydney was Conrad Martens, the painter, who had been the artist of the expedition.

He came to Sydney with an introduction to Captain Phillip Parker King and established his studio in Bridge-street.

Yet another shipmate was Owen Stanley, who died on his ship H.M.S. Rattlesnake, in Sydney Harbor, and is known to history by exploration in New Guinea, where Mount Owen Stanley was named after him.

Mayor of Tamworth

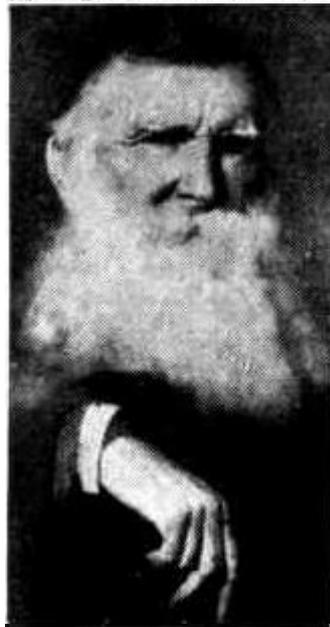
While at Goonoo Goonoo Station, Philip Gidley King was elected the first Mayor of Tamworth. He was re-elected three times.

In 1879-80, he acted as a commissioner of the International Exhibition at Sydney. In 1880 he was appointed a member of the Legislative Council, where he served for 24 years.

For 12 years he served as a trustee of the Public Library, and in 1894, at the age of 78, he was elected president of the Australian Club.

As a youngster in the Adventure and the Beagle, King had much experience in seeing human nature in primitive forms—in the inhabitants of Terra del Fuego.

In Australia, he took great interest in our aborigines, so much so that for many years he was a particularly active member (under the able chairmanship of the late Edmund Fosbery)



Philip Gidley King

have sapped his vitality. His naval grandfather, Governor King, had died at 50, and his father, Rear-Admiral King, at 64.

But he himself had an exceptionally long life, living to be nearly 87; and it was a vigorous old age.

He died in Sydney on August 5, 1904. His wife, a granddaughter of Governor King, lived 84 years.

King's Descendants

They were survived by three of their four children, who occupied prominent positions in the colony, and whose names are still well remembered—

positions in the colony, and whose names are still well remembered—George B. Gidley King, of Goonoo Goonoo, superintendent of the Peel River Company; John Lethbridge King, stipendiary magistrate in Sydney and for many years president of the Australasian Pioneers' Club; and Mrs. Elizabeth Goldfinch, mother of Sir Philip Goldfinch. His grand-children numbered 19 and his great-grand-children 11.

Altogether, Philip Gidley King had one of the most picturesque careers of those of the Australian-born who helped New South Wales in its development in the second half-century of its existence.

Both his father and his grandfather were bald and clean-shaven; but he himself had a flowing beard, to which was added a fine head of hair.

Both of these attributes have been strikingly depicted in an oil portrait of him, when president of the Australian Club, which was painted by Tom Roberts and now hangs in the club.