JOHN HOSKING 1806 - 1882

On 20th July, 1992, celebrations were held to mark the sesqui-centenary of the proclamation of Sydney as a city and the passing of the Act by the Legislative Council of New South Wales to enable elections to be held for the first city council.

Sydney was not, however, the first Australian colonial capital to be so proclaimed. That honour belongs to Adelaide which became the nation's oldest municipality in 1840.

A number of previous attempts had been made to have Sydney govern its own affairs.

In 1833 a proclamation was issued, passing the government of Sydney to three police magistrates.

This proved to be so unsatisfactory that a petition was presented to Governor Bourke in 1835 requesting a more organised form of local control. The Governor laid the petition before the Legislative Council but the matter fell into abeyance until 1839 when the Colonial Office considered the advisability of introducing local government into New South Wales. Once again the proposal came to nothing.

In 1840, Governor Gipps brought forward a bill which included a clause prohibiting all persons who had been transported as convicts from voting.

The Australian Patriotic Association led by Bro. William Charles Wentworth, Bro. Sir John Jamison and Bro. Dr. William Bland bitterly opposed the Bill which the Governor was forced to withdraw.

By 1842 the colony was entering the grip of an economic depression. Prior to this, money and credit was readily available, wool prices had soared and speculative investment was rife. Governor Gipps, in order to relieve some of the financial burden, introduced yet another Bill into the Legislative Council to enable the townsfolk of Sydney to govern their own affairs.

It was passed on 20th July, 1842. The Act is entitled "An Act to declare the town of Sydney to be a city and to incorporate the inhabitants thereof".

Melbourne was incorporated on 12th August, 1842, but only as a town. Consequently, Melbourne's inhabitants were merely "burgesses", while those of Sydney basked in the title of "citizens".

The cost of incorporating Sydney was 257 pounds, 19 shillings and 6 pence.

The city itself did not extend much beyond Liverpool Street. In George Street, almost the whole western side was occupied by the Military Barracks, the Markets and the burial ground which became the site for the Sydney Town Hall. Old customs die hard and it was not called a City Hall.

Roads were generally poor with little or no drainage, so that pedestrians had to cope with gutters running with storm water and sewage.

Bullock waggons still battled their way up Brickfield Hill and there were just 165 gas lamps.

There was much to be done.

The city was divided into six wards named Bourke's, Brisbane's, Cook, Gipps, Macquarie and Phillip's and an alderman and two assessors were appointed by Governor Gipps for each ward. He also appointed an acting Town Clerk.

The Provisional Alderman for Phillip's Ward was Bro. Captain Joseph Long-Innes who, in 1848, became the first Provincial Grand Master for New South Wales under the English Constitution.

Every male person over 21 who occupied a house, warehouse, counting house or shop worth 25 pounds for the prior year and who lived in the city, or within seven miles, was eligible to vote.

Any adult male who was in possession of property valued at 1,000 pounds or which was rated at an annual value of not less than 50 pounds was eligible for election.

There were 46 candidates for the 24 available positions of councillor.

The first election day was on 1st November, 1842, a day, as the 'Sydney Herald' described it, whose: "genial weather and cold breeze ...... added much to the general enjoyment".

The declared public holiday did much the same.

The day was remarkably free from incident although Bourke's Ward saw a violent quarrel between husband and wife over which candidate the husband should support!

On 9th November, 1842, the newly elected councillors assembled for the first time in a rented room on the first floor of the north east corner of the old Market building in George Street.

The business was to elect 6 aldermen and a mayor.

Bro. John Hosking had the distinction of being elected the first Mayor of Sydney. He was to hold office for less than 12 months.

The title of the office did not change to Lord Mayor until 1902.

On 21st December, 1842, the new Mayor gave a dinner to the members of the Corporation and the elite of the citizens at Mr. Sparks' Royal Hotel.

The 349 guests enjoyed 70 tureens of soup, 56 turkeys, 50 geese, 60 couple of boiled and roast fowls, 36 hams, 50 tongues, 70 joints of butcher's meat, 100 dishes of vegetables, 400 aside dishes and 1200 dishes of confectionary including 800 dishes of dessert.

Our Brother John Hosking knew how to run a festive board!

He was born in London in 1806 and first arrived in Australia with his parents on 29th January, 1809.

His father, John Hosking Senior, had been invited to the colony by the Rev. Samuel Marsden to take charge of the orphan school.

The family took an active part in the Methodist Society and the Benevolent Society.

In July, 1819, the family returned to England. Two of Hosking's sons again emigrated to the colony; John Junior arrived in the 'Sir George Osborne' in December, 1825 and set up as a merchant in Sydney having already received a land grant in the previous June.

On 16th June, 1829, he married Martha Foxlowe Terry, daughter of Bro. Samuel Terry, the wealthy emancipist merchant, known throughout the colony as the 'Botany Bay Rothschild'.

Through his wife he thus inherited a part of the estimated 50,000 pounds left by his father-in-law at his death in 1838.

His brother, Peter Mann Hosking, a surgeon, arrived in the 'Sovereign' in February, 1831 and was appointed dispenser and visiting surgeon to the Sydney Dispensary. He married a daughter of Bro. Reuben Uther, a member of the Australian Social Lodge No. 260 Irish Constitution.

John Hosking first set up in business at stores in Pitt Street, and later at Albion Wharf, Sussex Street where he owned the Albion Mills.

He formed a partnership with John Terry Hughes and the firm rose rapidly in prosperity.

Hosking acquired considerable property in Sydney and large country holdings at Jamberoo near Kiama, Gilimatong Station in the Monaro district and Foxlowe estate on the Molonglo River.

He also acquired Macquarie Fields House and estate given by Samuel Terry to his daughter.

He was a member of the Southern Cattle Association and held stock in the Bank of New South Wales and the Sydney Banking Company of which he was a director in 1841.

Like his father, he took an active part in the Methodist Church and was a shareholder in the Sydney College.

Following his election as Mayor, he was appointed a Magistrate in December, 1842. A Sydney newspaper wrote of his "plain, sound, practical good sense .... his general popularity, amenity of manners, and extensive private benevolence".

One of his official duties, imposed by the Act of Incorporation, was to set up boundary stores to mark the limits of the city. Hosking placed the order with the firm of P.N. Russell.

His political career came to an abrupt end when, during the economic depression of 1843, Hughes and Hosking became insolvent and brought down with them the Bank of Australia to which they owed more than 150,000 pounds.

Hosking was forced to retire from the city corporation and, in accordance with the Act, was fined 50 pounds for failing to complete his term of office. Some of his property was sold to pay his debts.

His departure did little to improve the reputation of the members of the fledgling Council or dampen the criticism of the ability of those elected to administer the affairs of the city.

His financial position eventually recovered and, in 1854, he built a fine colonial mansion called 'Carrara' on the heights at Vaucluse overlooking Rose Bay. The fireplaces were of Carrara marble specially imported from Italy.

The Hoskings rented Vaucluse House while Carrara was under construction.

Vaucluse House had originally been built by Bro. Sir Henry Browne Hayes and subsequently occupied by Bro. Captain John Piper and Bro. William Charles Wentworth.

It was in the 1880's, in the rocks just above the beach below Carrara, that the aviation pioneer, Bro Lawrence Hargrave, saw two heavy iron rings and believed that he had discovered the place where Spanish sailors careened

their ships long before the arrival of the British.

Hosking, whose wife, Martha, had died at Mount Pleasant in 1877, left Carrara for Penrith where he died on 9th September, 1882.

His name is commemorated by Hosking Place which runs off Castlereagh Street between Martin Place and Hunter Street and is situated where Samuel Terry owned a row of three storey houses.

The Hosking name is also remembered by streets at Glenfield, Balmain, Bonnyrigg and Mount Pleasant.

The 'History of the Lodge of Australia', published in Sydney in 1913, records that, during the first term of Bro. Sir John Jamison as Worshipful Master in 1834, one of the initiates during the latter half of the year was "Bro. John Hosking, subsequently first Mayor of Sydney".

The Lodge of Australia was numbered 820 and was the first English Constitution lodge consecrated in Australia. The warrant was dated 21st June, 1828.

The lodge was subsequently re-numbered 548 and 390 by the United Grand Lodge of England and, in 1888, it became No. 3 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

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