

## The Lipscombes

By Jane Smith

Five babies had been born at sea during the *Emigrant's* voyage: the Brimble boy, whose name, William, had been changed to Andrew after his father's death; Mary Meara; the unnamed Canning girl; baby Hallett; and the little Salisbury boy. Of these, only the first two survived to enjoy their adopted land.

A sixth child had been born in the final hours of quarantine. George Stradbrook Lipscombe's birth at Dunwich on 14 November, 1850, just as the embattled emigrants were preparing to leave the island and re-enter society, must have seemed like a miracle. A sign, perhaps, of hope – of renewal. Death was behind them; new life ahead.

Little George's parents were Henry and Elizabeth Lipscombe. They were a young English couple – newlyweds from Surrey. Henry was a brick-maker who had worked alongside John Farmer to manage the stores at Dunwich. Henry had been brought up in the brick, tile, and pottery trades; his father had been foreman of a leading brick and tile works in Surrey. Shortly after Henry's marriage, his father had died and the couple had decided to emigrate.

They stayed only a short time in Moreton Bay. The discovery of gold lured Henry to the Turon River where he, like so many other young men, tried to make his fortune from prospecting. When his plan failed, he returned to the trade he knew best: brick-making. With his wife and small child, Henry settled in Sydney and took up a lease at the Waterloo Estate (now Redfern), and began to manufacture bricks. But when the land increased in value he closed the works and let the ground out on building leases. Lipscombe then gradually began to accumulate lucrative contracts supplying bricks for the railways and other public works. He travelled widely in the course of his work, providing bricks for the construction of culverts, bridges and train lines as far west as Orange and Dubbo.

In the meantime, the young son whose middle name was taken from the island on which he was born had acquired six younger siblings. Once settled in New South Wales, Henry sponsored his mother's and younger brother George's emigration. George had also followed the family's brick-making tradition. He made his home in Wagga Wagga, where he established brickworks renowned for their innovations; he was the first to introduce brick-making machinery to the district. George died in 1898 after a short illness: 'a most kindly natured man...widely respected by a large circle of friends.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1882, Henry decided it was time to 'settle down'. In his latter years, he established a thriving business in 'Druitt Town', bought land and built some houses in Burwood where he planned to spend the rest of his days 'in peace and comfort' with his family<sup>2</sup>. When he retired from his business, Henry left it in his sons' hands. In 1886, he was elected an Alderman for Burwood, and in 1888 he served as Mayor – a position he held for a year. Henry's second son, Henry George Lipscombe, was also involved in public life, becoming Mayor of Enfield in 1894-1895. Henry senior died in 1891 of apoplexy and exhaustion during the influenza epidemic. His wife, Elizabeth, followed him to the grave a few weeks later.

George Stradbrook Lipscombe predeceased his father. He must have lived to at least 14 months of age, for a 'Mrs Lipscomb and child' sailed from Moreton Bay to Sydney in February 1852.<sup>3</sup> The only other evidence that he ever existed is the registration of his baptism and a note in the 'children of marriage' column on his father's death certificate: '1 male, dead'. George probably died in infancy.

---

<sup>1</sup> (1898, Oct 20). *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, p.2

<sup>2</sup> (1888, Aug 18). *Australian Town and Country Journal*, p.29

<sup>3</sup> (1852, Feb 14). *The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, p.50