

THE PAULSGROVE DIARY

THE PAULSGROVE DIARY (Notes by A. Cousins). By the Manager of "Paulsgrove," the Mt. Keira Estate, 1833-34.

Recent publication of a further volume of Mr. Justice Ferguson's work on Australiana makes the inclusion of the following summary apposite.

Mr. Justice Ferguson has in his possession a small diary covering period June 1st, 1833 to April 21st, 1834, with November and December missing. The writer's name is not given, but Mr. Waldron, of Springhill, Wollongong, who gave it to Mr. E. J. Brady, said it was a Mr. Webster, who was eventually drowned near Tumut.

Apparently the diarist was overseer to Mr. Jas Staves Spearing, who owned Paulsgrove, a property of 2,000 acres, later known as Mt. Keira Estate. His wife had another 2,000 acres at Bellambi called Palamba and Palamby in the diary.

At that time the total number of free people in the County of Camden was: Males 669, females 174, while the convicts numbered 1,301. There was no town in Illawarra, no shop, no wharf, no church, no cemetery. Beef cattle and cedar were what the few settlers chiefly depended upon, the former being brought to and from the district by using those steep rugged mountain paths near Bulli and Mt. Keira. The Cedar getters used their tiny sailing craft from 10 to 30 tons which used the little "boat harbour" at Wollongong, Bellambi, Shellharbour, Kiama etc.

Until 1831 the district was under control of the military at Five Islands till 1829 and then at Wollongong where barracks were built in 1830. In 1831 the control was handed over to a Resident Magistrate, Mr. Francis Allman, whose clerk, Mr. Bennett, acted as Postmaster, receiving a small amount for this extra service.

THE PROPERTY: Paulsgrove extended from what is now North Wollongong, astride of Para Creek, up the slopes towards Mt. Keira and then at the back of Garden Hill towards Unanderra. This was the home farm which was used for sheep, horses, cattle and crops. Most of it at the time was in its natural state.

Palamba (Bellambi) was also used for grazing. Besides these, Mr. Spearing rented the Five Islands Estate.

Feb. 23rd, 1834: "Sown 11 acres over again at Teddy Hughes' and Emery's, more for the sake of giving me a sweating than anything else."

In the land properly cleared, bullock teams were used. In the busy seasons the diary records 4 such teams at work at the same time.

Jan. 7th: "Two teams began ploughing the paddock near the swamp. Two between the corn and barley field."

Jan. 13th: "4 teams at plough in the paddock below the long paddock."

In the partially cleared land, however, the seed had to be chipped in, thus:

- "The men chipped in wheat and burned off."
- "Smith and Wilson chipped in near Emery's."
- "Finished chipping in the wheat."

The N.S.W. Almanac credits Mr. Spearing with having two water mills. The diary only mentions one. This was naturally on Para Creek, where, as the diary says, grinding the wheat into flour was done mostly in wet weather.

June 10th, 1833: "Sown the flower seeds brought from England."

ORCHARD: In addition to the field crops mentioned above, Mr. Spearing had an orchard from which according to N.S.W. Almanac, some very fine fruit was sent to Sydney. From time to time the diarist mentions his work there — trimming the vines, pruning, budding and grafting the fruit trees — apricots, peaches, pears, plums — one entry states that some of the peaches were stolen, the blacks receiving the blame.

STOCK: In no place does the diarist mention the number of horses on the estate. Those there seem to have been hacks. Apparently all the hauling and farm work was done by bullocks.

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