LETTER FROM RACHEL HENNING:

Mount Vernon,*
August 9, 1872.

My Dearest Etaa,

Annie and Mr. Hedgeland are both gone to bed very tired, and my husband has taken the carriage to fetch Biddulph back from a friend’s where he has been spending the evening.

We have, I think, at last found an abode that will suit us. About a fortnight ago Mr. Taylor and I made an excursion to Wollongong to look at some farms that we had heard of there. We went down by the steamer, which only takes about five hours going from Sydney, took up our residence at the Queen’s Hotel (a very comfortable place), and spent the next day in driving out to see the farms in question. There were two by Lake Illawarra that we did not like, but one on what they call American Creek we were delighted with.

The land is very good. There is a tolerable house which we can inhabit while we build another, a creek (as they call a brook here) running right through the farm, and a site for a new house where there is a most lovely view of the whole Bulli Range. We heard today that the owner will accept the sum we offered for it, so if the title, etc., prove satisfactory, we shall probably complete the purchase.

We shall be very glad to be settled again, as you may imagine. If we do go to Wollongong we shall be within easy reach of Sydney and all our friends here, as besides the steamer there is a coach road over the mountains. We returned that way, and a very good road it is. It was made, I believe, chiefly in consequence of Biddulph’s representations when he lived there.

Of course it is steep in parts, and passengers with any humanity in them generally walk to the top, but you can hardly imagine anything more beautiful than the scenery. Sometimes at a turn of the road you look down upon green depths of tropical vegetation, cabbage-palms and tree-ferns and magnificent trees, etc., all bound together by festoons of flowering creepers. The whole valley of Illawarra lying below, and the sea and the “Five Islands” beyond all. The beauty ceases at the top of the mountain, and a dull road leads to Campbelltown, where you take train for Sydney.

Our farm is not near the Bulli Mountain, but three miles on the other side of Wollongong, where, however, the scenery is also very beautiful. Having once seen the Illawarra district quite spoils you for any other part of Australia. If no unexpected hitch occurs I hope we shall soon have a home of our own there.

They are all prospering here.

* The Sydney-suburban home of the Hedgelands.

HISTORY OF THE EAST-WEST LINK:

In 1875, contractors began work on the erection of poles, insulators and wires for the first East-West telegraph link.

Two years later, on December 8, 1877, their task was completed and Perth was connected to Adelaide, via Albany, Esperance, Israelite Bay, Eyre and Eucla.

The connection was a single iron wire carried by thousands of squared, 14 ft. jarrah poles (16 to a mile).