

ROBERT MATTESON VAUGHN (Born October 1833 Chardon Ohio USA)

Robert Vaughn was a significant pioneer in the early days of Grenfell's history. The land we are standing on and the land on which the Grenfell swimming pool is situated are part of a 5 acre parcel of Vaughn's property which he bequeathed to the people of Grenfell in his Will when he died in 1908.

Robert Matteson Vaughn was born in October 1833 in Chardon in the state of Ohio in USA where his parents had a farm. In 1849 when he was 16 he and two older brothers got on their horses and rode right across America to the goldfields of California. They didn't find their fortunes but did meet Edward Hargreaves who was in America at the time. Hargreaves told of similarities in the geology of the Californian gold fields to that of country around Bathurst, Orange, Ophir and the Turon area in NSW. Many American goldseekers including Robert, but not his brothers, sailed for Australia on the same ship as Edward Hargreaves returning to his homeland in 1851.

Strong winds blew their ship off course and instead of landing in Sydney and heading to the Turon gold fields, Robert Vaughn's Australian life began from Melbourne and the Victorian goldfields. He soon decided supplying stores and food to the miners was a better option than trying to find elusive gold and records show he had a profitable trading business on Woolshed Creek near Beechworth in Vic.

He later moved up to Yass where he teamed up with Thomas Colls, a builder, learned the building trade from him, then trained as a Civil Engineer. The old Bank of NSW building in Yass and the P.O. in Forbes are two of Robert Vaughn's works. Robert married his boss' daughter Sarah Colls in Yass in 1864 and they moved to Grenfell in 1867 where he became a significant figure in establishing Grenfell's future.

The first house he built for his family was in Forbes Street (the cottage with peaked roof) and later their permanent house which is the lovely brick house on the rise, with the tall palm tree in the front garden at 51 Forbes Street, Grenfell. He called this property "The One Mile".

Vaughn became a partner in a company operating a stream driven quartz-crushing machine. By 1875 he was proprietor of several steam saw mills and later set up an iron foundry. Both he and his wife Sarah became deeply involved in the Grenfell community.

In 1870 Robert was appointed Magistrate, 1871 President of the School of Arts and in 1872 president of the Hospital. In 1873 he was appointed District Coroner and by 1879 was Chairman of the Public School Board, on committees of the Pastoral, Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Association as well as the Prospecting Association.

As Chairman of the Railway League, along with James Watson, he led a deputation to the colony's Secretary for Public Works in a vain attempt to get the southern and western railways connected from Murrumburrah to Orange via Young, Grenfell and Forbes.

In 1880 Robert Vaughn was elected to the Legislative Assembly as member for Grenfell and became Secretary for Mines in Sir John Robertson's government. Both he and Thomas Colls (his father in law) were later members of Sir Henry Parkes' parliament representing Grenfell and Yass respectively.

Failing health led to the Vaughn's departure to live in Sydney in 1903 and he died aged 75 in 1908, survived by Sarah, 5 daughters and 3 sons. He is buried at Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney.

Sarah's big regret was that her favourite horse was stolen from the land below their house by Ben Hall the bushranger !

Robert and Sarah Vaughn were my Great Great Grandparents.

Carol Whyte

FROM "OUR BEGATTINGS" by Kathleen Lenthall (nee Sadlier)
Robert & Sarah Vaughn's granddaughter (1896-2000)

HON. ROBERT MATTESON - VAUGHN J.P., M.P.

Sometime Secretary for Mines in New South Wales, was the founder of our Australian Vaughn line.

My Grandfather Robert Vaughn was born on his father's farm at Chardon, Ohio, on 23rd October, 1833. He was descended from two long lines of American pioneers starting from John Vahan (Vaughn) C.1619 and Henry Matteson, The Immigrant, C.1640.

There were Revolutionary soldiers on both sides of his family. (Ohio family Bible and other records).

Robert and his brothers were educated at the Baptist Geauga Seminary in Chester, Ohio. (Vaughn family of R.I. By H. Vaughn Griffin 1976). President Garfield was a pupil and friend at the School at the same time.

They were teenagers when their father died in 1846. Unable to, and probably unwilling to work a large farm, and resentful of their mother's marriage to a Mr. Senter soon after father Jesse's death, Robert and two of his brothers set out on the long journey west to the Californian Goldfields in 1849. They arrived there with the second stream of "hopefuls". There were many disappointed "miners" in this second stream including Robert. However, they all gained some practical experience and earned the designation of "forty-niner".

Hearing of gold discoveries in Australia, Robert decided to come to New South Wales but the other two remained in America. Robert, with other young men aiming for the Australian fields, arrived in Melbourne instead of Sydney due to unfavourable winds in the ship "Emma" in 1851. The same ship which brought Hargreaves back to N.S.W. (Family legend).

He worked his way northwards gaining more experience on the way. He conducted a prosperous store on the Woolshed Creek, Beechworth, Victoria on the main track from Melbourne to Sydney with a partner.

We next hear of him in Yass N.S.W., where he spent some years as a building contractor associated with Thomas George Colls, his future father-in-law, who was becoming well established as an Inn Keeper and contractor in that town - (Yass Historical Society and Newspaper Records).

In 1863 he joined the Masonic Lodge, Yass. He was a dedicated Mason until 1891.

Robert married the first child of Thomas Colls, Sarah Anne, on 12.2.1864 at St. Clements C. of E., Yass.

Robert and Sarah built their first home in North Yass and the first two of their children were born there.

By this time gold was being discovered in the Grenfell area. At first it was alluvial but about 1866 reef gold was found in the Weddin Mountains by Cornelius O'Brien.

Robert sold his household goods 7.3.1868 and T. Colls advertised the home to let on 14.3.1868.

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Robert moved with his family to Grenfell (he was apparently still affected by gold fever which was rapidly spreading along Emu Creek as alluvial gold was found there. The first alluvial was one mile along the creek. Others up to seven miles along it were found. Robert settled on the One Mile find and worked it, ultimately building his home on this patch. The house called "One Mile" was still standing and occupied in 1983, and in 2019.

The alluvials did not last very long and since reef gold was being discovered Robert decided that it would be more profitable to transfer his activities to the engineering side of the industry. On "One Mile" he set up a steam-driven ten-head stamper mill on Young Road for crushing ore from the reefs. The water for the steam being got from a very large dam already located in the Bogolong Range Valley just outside the settlement. The water was directed into a dam on "One Mile". This was always full and was used in later years by the local youth as a swimming pool. It is still there known as "Vaughn's Public Watering Place".

A ring of Sarah's made from the first gold mined at "One Mile" still exists in the family.

He also began manufacturing machine parts.

Robert's business enterprise, diligence and honesty were rewarded with success. He was becoming a land owner in a big way and the father of a large family. Like his father-in-law Thomas Colls of Yass, he became much involved in the affairs of the district where he lived. In 1869 he joined Lodge St. Andrew, Grenfell and became Master in 1873.

On 16.12.1870 Robert Vaughn was appointed District Magistrate and also became a member of the very active School Board. A school had successfully been established in 1867 by Gustarves Killger (picture in "Sydney and The Bush, a Pictorial History of Education in N.S.W.", p.72). In 1872 he was elected President of the Hospital Committee and on 10th June 1873, appointed local Coroner.

In 1875 Robert established an Iron Foundry of great use to the district, which was now rapidly changing into a vast wheat growing area as gold was petering out.

In 1876 he was a foundation member of the Show Committee and on the Committee of the Pastoral, Agricultural, Horticultural, Industrial Association set up soon after the Show Committee.

From 1879 onwards Grenfell had great need of rail links and a Grenfell Rail League was instituted of twelve members who worked actively for rail extensions in the district. Robert was a member. For some years Grenfell was not included in the linking up, although several railways were constructed around Grenfell. Surveys for the most desired rail links were made from various camps and agitation for a Grenfell-Koorawatha rail link was continued by the committee. This was finally built and continued on to Cowra and Young.

Instead of now becoming a wheat farmer, probably because of youthful experience in Ohio, Robert continued to put money into property in the township. Old maps of Grenfell show his name on many town lots.

When a child I was told that my Grandfather had donated an area of five acres for a Town Park. Early memories of a visit to the town visualises large iron gates and an iron-grid bandstand in Vaughn Park. The original dedication was on 25th November, 1892. The present Vaughn Park is vastly different from my early memory of it. It now includes a swimming pool and bowling green.

By the year 1871 Robert Vaughn was well into the contracting period of his life being listed now as Civil Engineer (C.E.). This phase continued for about twenty years. Among his successful works still standing and being used is the Forbes Post Office built 1881 (recently used in a definitive series of Postage Stamps issued in 1982) and the Bank of N.S.W. in Yass, built in 1885.

Robert and Sarah were for a long time leading members of the Anglican Church and during the same period he was a steward of the local Racing Committee.

In May 1879 my Grandfather was appointed commissioner for Insolvent Estates, Chairman of the Railway League and Agent for the Australian Mutual Fire Insurance Society. At this time he was in partnership with J.H. May (Sydney) contracting for engineering projects.

In 1880 Robert Vaughn was asked to nominate for election to the Legislative Assembly (the first). He was subsequently elected to represent the Grenfell District. His first term of service in the Legislature lasted from 1880 to 1889. During these years he was associated with such well-known Australians as Robertson, Parkes and W.A. Holman (who was born in Grenfell).

Robert was Secretary for Mines during the Ministry of Sir John Robertson (1885-1886).

(It was interesting for me to learn in later years that during Grandfather's electioneering campaigns he was driven around the district by Mr. Napier of Young - a loyal adherent, and Grandfather of a son-in-law Gordon Webb).

Grandfather continued contracting together with J.H. May and alone in the sphere of Civil Engineering during his entire Parliamentary career. It was necessary to do this as there was neither salary nor superannuation for members in those days. It was an expensive career of service to the community. His partnership with J.H. May involved him in such schemes as the extension of the Bondi sewer, about which there was a lengthy Parliamentary enquiry. During this period Robert was Director of the Illawarra Harbour Land Corporation and personally possessed large holdings in the Lake Illawarra District. This fact probably gave rise to the family legend that Robert had loaned the Parliament large amounts of money for development of the harbour without any recompense or return.

By 1890 the work at the Vaughn Mills etc. was declining and the expenses for his second session in Parliament 1891 - 1894 were high.

During this session he was the oldest member, the average age being around 40 years. It was also the time when a new Labour Party was emerging, virile and militant, so this session must have been physically rather wearing. Now, too, began the great recession in Grandfather's personal fortune due primarily to the bank's crash of that period.

However, he was able to retain enough capital investment to maintain his way of life for some years longer. In 1894 he was a very active member of the Committee fighting to obtain a rail link with Young.

There was no success at first but later in 1899 Grandfather Vaughn and my father W.H. Sadleir were members of the Committee of twelve appointed to further this project. My father, W.H. Sadleir was the first Secretary of the Committee, followed by Mr. Cousins. After two years they achieved success when the Parliament approved the project and voted ninety-two thousand three hundred and fifty pounds for it. The White Home Railway to Young became a fact about 1901.

At the end of the century Robert decided to leave Grenfell. He realised on what assets he had left and, a much poorer man than when he had started up in the town, moved to Sydney in 1901 with the unmarried members of his family and Grandmother Sarah living in Windsor Street, Paddington for a while.

Some months later they were entertained in Grenfell and presented with an illuminated address and the usual purse of sovereigns.

Robert moved with the family to a two-storied house in Glenmore Road, Paddington for some years then moved to No. 16 Duxford Street, Paddinton.

In 1901 he was a guest at the Commonwealth Federation Ceremony held in Centennial Park, Woollahra.

By this time his sons had obtained positions with W.C. Penfold. Each one had good mechanical ability. All the daughters except the youngest, Ida, were married.

Robert's health began to decline seriously by 1905. He tried to occupy himself with watch repairing as a hobby during the long boring days.

He had obtained the old age pension of 5/- per week, gall for a one time independent wealthy man.

Robert Vaughn died at 16 Duxford Street, Paddington on 14th April, 1908 and is buried in Rookwood Cemetery (C. of E.). His Death Certificate No. 6672.

According to Notices in the "Ovens and Murray Advertiser" during 1856/1857 and "The Age" newspaper, Robert Vaughn was in partnership with a Mr. Lehman in a General Store on the Woolshed goldfields. This partnership was dissolved 14th August 1856 and another partner, Mr. Holland, acquired. This second partnership was dissolved, 8th September 1856 and Mr. Holland carried on the store.

In the meantime, the firm Vaughn and Lehman were being investigated by the Insolvency Commissioner. Vaughn had bought out Lehman's share for two hundred pounds taking over the liabilities. This caused great financial problems for Vaughn and great difficulty for the Commissioner in clearing up the affair in May 1857.

It appears that R. Vaughn paid up all liabilities out of money paid to him by Holland for Robert's own share in the business.

In 1857 Robert was in partnership again. This time with a Mr. Compton the interest being a water-race on Woolshed goldfields.

Robert Vaughn's wife (from her granddaughter Kathleen's research)

SARAH ANNE (COLLS) VAUGHN

1844 - 1939.

1844?

(Kathleen's)

My maternal Grandmother, Sarah Anne Colls, was born at Liverpool (Irish Town) at the house of her parents, Thomas George and Elizabeth Colls, on 25.4.1844 and baptized on 19.5.1844 at St. Lukes Church (No. 246 Church Records). The site occupied later by the old men's home was where Thomas carried on his business of wheelwright. Sarah was their first child.

Thomas was successfully employed but because of better prospects offering in the Yass district, Thomas and Elizabeth moved there, arriving on 12.9.1846 with two very young children.

Thomas Colls began to succeed in business immediately after they settled down near the river bank then later in a cottage behind the old Australian Stores until he obtained the Commercial Hotel.

Because of lack of a suitable school, Sarah was sent at an early age to boarding school, so missed much of the discomfort occasioned by the rather primitive conditions of living during those early years of their residence there. She went first to Kiama on the south coast of N.S.W. as a pupil at the school run by Miss Hindmarsh. To reach this place she had to travel by coach to Sydney, then by sailing ship down the coast and finally by rowing boat to shore at Kiama, where there was then no wharf. Later she was sent to a Ladies' College at Goulburn conducted by Mr. Ross, the Presbyterian Minister.

She used to tell how one coach she travelled in was held up by bushrangers. One of the gang pretended that he was taking away her tiny sunshade with him, but returned it to her before the gang rode off.

Sarah left school to return home to very comfortable circumstances because of the financial success of her father, ably assisted by her mother.

Because of his position in the town she was able, during her late teens, to meet interesting people in Yass which was becoming a very busy town. She led a full social life, in addition to receiving a training in running a household from her competent mother.

Sarah married Robert Vaughn who had arrived in Yass after experience at the gold fields in different states. He became a successful contractor there.

Sarah and Robert were married at St. Clements Church of England, Yass, on 12.2.1864. Her bridal veil of Limerick lace survived until recent years and the famous satin embroidered fringed carved ivory-handled sunshade she carried still exists, though showing its age..

The reception was a splendid affair held at the Commercial Hotel.

Soon the couple moved on to Young.

From there they moved into the Grenfell area in 1867 and Robert occupied himself in farming for a short period, but when alluvial and reef gold were discovered in this area became very involved in the industry.

Altogether Sarah was more than thirty years in Grenfell and as success followed Robert's activities, she soon became a leader in the various ladies' committees being formed to help the interests of the growing town - church, charitable, hospital and many others. Their home "One Mile Cottage" became open house to all and their purse readily opened to help needy appeals.

One setback for Sarah was the theft by Ben Hall of her favourite hack from one of the numerous Vaughn paddocks.

All but her first child were born at Grenfell.

One memory of Sarah's kindness to me was the gift of a red pin-spotted muslin frock and sunshade to match when I was about four years old living at Junee. A tiny kitten given me at the same time ruined the frock when objecting violently to being carried around on show. Another frock from the same source soon replaced the ruined one.

When old she had the habit of keeping a paper twist of boiled lollies in the toe of a slipper - with these she would reward us when we behaved properly during our visits.

She was a loveable lady and generous by nature, though restricted by her low finances in later life.

Sarah loved the theatre and music. The latter she was able to satisfy by attending, on her own, concerts in the Sydney Town Hall in her late eighties. She travelled by tram to the city from Bondi. A friendly policeman on duty at the Town Hall in George Street, would answer her summons, escort her across George Street into the foyer of the Town Hall. At the end of the performance he was usually there to escort her back again to the safety of Park Street.

She was sometimes the guest of the entrepreneur Mr. Harry Miller who would call for her in his Rolls, take her to the theatre, returning her home to Bondi after the play.

Sarah was related to the Millers, Brownes and Rose families - also the Grahams of Liverpool, the Wilsons of Airds, the Touts, Garnseys and Bennets. She was proud of the connection with Lieut. Wilson of Wilson's Promontory fame.

After leading a very active life, Sarah died quietly at the home of her youngest daughter, Ida Connell, 97 Curlew Street, Bondi Beach, on 14th June, 1939, aged 95 years. She is buried at Rookwood Cemetery.

This was a sad time, especially for Ida, as her husband died suddenly a few days after Sarah and the wife of her brother Lesley Vaughn died the following month.

Family of Sarah (Colls) Vaughn and Robert Vaughn J.P.

1. Mabel (26.4.1865 - 18.12.1918) married at Yass to David Barr Ferguson M.A., Headmaster of Grafton Public School, 11.7.1884: born Yass.
2 children - 1 daughter, 1 son.
2. Cicero Matteson (1867 - 1868) born Yass 7.3.1867.
3. Alexander Clegg (1868 - 1903).
4. Ethel Emily (16.4.1871 - 7.7.1949) born Grenfell. Married at Grenfell to William Sadleir 28.8.1895. 5 daughters. *Kath's parents*
5. Clarence Grenfell (22.11.1873 - 27.2.1952) born Grenfell. Married Grace Rowell - 2 daughters.
6. Lilian Adella (6.7.1875 - 6.6.1949) born Grenfell. Married Major T. Remer Farram. 3 daughters, 1 son. *Maries parents*
7. Leslie Matteson (9.5.1879 - 1940) born Grenfell. Married Beatrice Bradley. 1 daughter, 1 son.

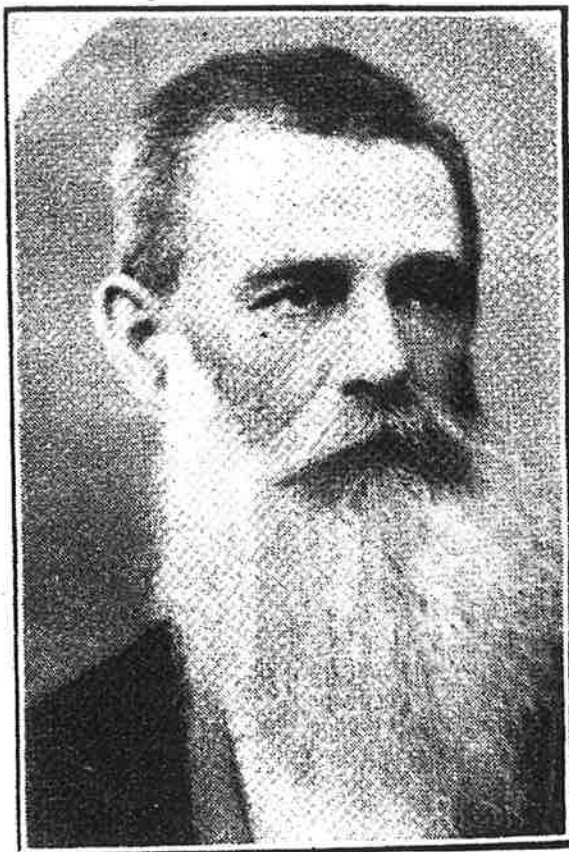
my grt. Grandmother (Carol)

8. Florence Lillian (1880 - 1898) died of Typhoid.
9. Ida Australia (16.6.1883 - 13.10.1968) born Grenfell. Married James Connell. 2 daughters, 1 son.
10. Russell Meredith (23.11.1885 - 1970) born Grenfell. Married Winifred Welch. 1 daughter, 1 son.
11. Roy John (23.10.1889 - 1969) born Grenfell. Married Bertha Sandell. 1 son - died in infancy).

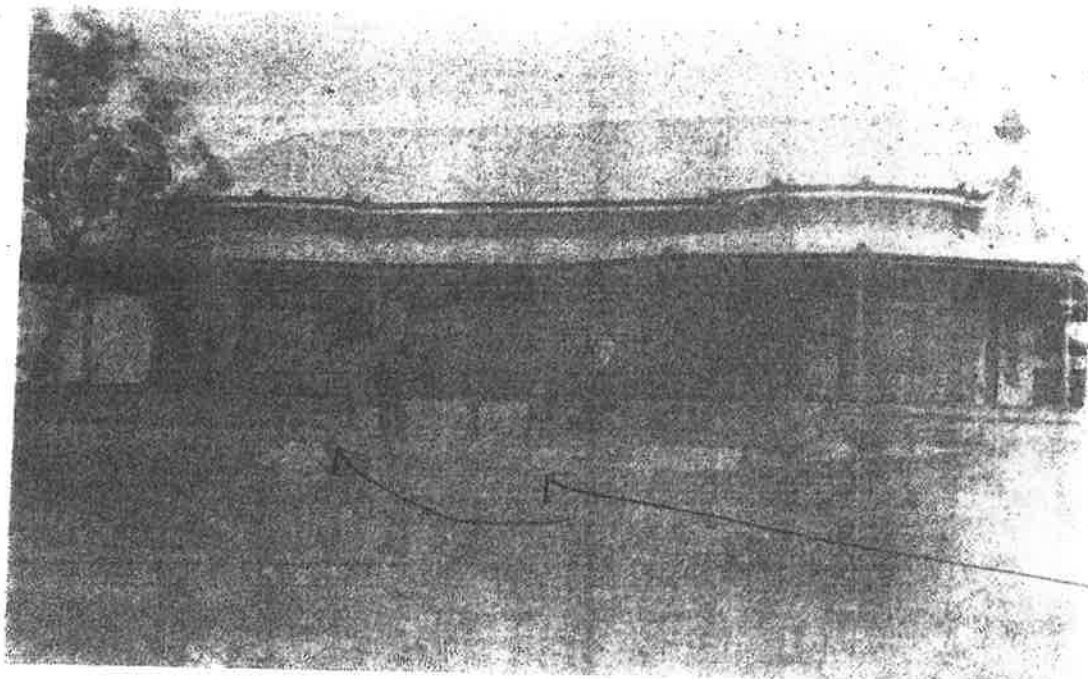
From Family Bible.



Robert Matteson Vaughn c.1859.



R. M. Vaughn, MLA., ex-Minister for Mines
1880.



These are horses

Vaughn home "One Mile" Grenfell - probable family members c.1900.
Thanks to Mr. Bell Grenfell Historical Society.



Old Council Chambers, Grenfell. Designed by W.H. Sadlier, Architect whose office is on the left of the Council building.
(Supplied by Grenfell Council).

W.H. Sadlier was husband of Robert & Sarah Vaughn's daughter Ethel. Their daughter Kathleen was born at the "one mile" Grenfell. (she married Fred Lenthall)