

# FRIENDS OF WESTGARTHTOWN

## Newsletter

Vol. 27, No. 2, October 2023

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF WESTGARTHTOWN, THE WURUNDJERI WILLUM PEOPLE, AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THEIR ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

In this edition of *Friends of Westgarthtown Newsletter* Gordon Johnston, Director of Ziebell's Farmhouse Museum and Heritage Garden, reports on events over the last six months. A highlight was the recent *Walking Thomastown* event, when over 2,000 people walked along Edgars Creek to the Lutheran Church, Reserve and Ziebell's Farmhouse.

Members of the Westgarthtown Descendants' Day team, led by Doretta Belôt, sold kinderpunsch at the *Walking Thomastown* event. Kinderpunsch is a non-alcoholic mulled punch served hot at German Christmas markets. Westgarthtown's kinderpunsch was produced by Doretta and her team and soon sold out, helping to make *Walking Thomastown* a great success.

The next Descendants' Day will be held on Sunday 3 March 2024. Please put this date in your diary and join us to celebrate your Westgarthtown heritage. For further details contact Rebekah Vagg, President of the Descendants' Day committee on 0448 569 472 or Jessica Adams, Secretary on 0409 808 906.

John Fry, our Tours Coordinator, also reports on the various group tours he has led this year, including a very interesting visit by members of the Victorian Costumes Guild.

Three research articles are also included. These cover the Thomas family, which gave its name to Thomastown; the 1850s gold rushes and their effect on Thomastown and Westgarthtown; and Emma (née Nebel) Seeber and her family.

2025 will mark the 175th Anniversary of the arrival of the *Pribislaw* in Australia in February 1850 and Westgarthtown's establishment in March 1850. A program of events to celebrate these significant milestones is under consideration.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 18 November and members will be advised of further details shortly. Membership subscriptions for 2023/24 will be due following the AGM.

Rob Wuchatsch

# Ziebell's Farmhouse Museum and Heritage Garden

## DIRECTOR'S UPDATE BY GORDON JOHNSTON

Hello Everyone,

Oh, how we love Spring! I'm sitting under the verandah at Ziebell's looking at the garden and the roses are set to burst into flower. We recently posted a photo of a Tree Peony on Facebook which received 1,400 likes. The garden is a credit to those who tend it as many of you already know. It is no wonder visitors often comment on the tranquillity of Ziebell's and Westgarthtown.



(Photo by Gordon Johnston).

However, tranquillity was not at the forefront in the recent *Walking Thomastown* event, when over 2000 people walked along Edgars Creek to the Lutheran Church, the Reserve and Ziebell's. The night was filled with performances, projections, light installations and more. Hundreds of people streamed through the museum and garden or sat on the front lawn and listened to musical performances. It was an outstanding success and continued to cement Westgarthtown and Ziebell's as relevant cultural assets for local and wider communities.

*Walking Thomastown* is also ideal for us to engage with locals, who built homes or grew up in Thomastown and Lalor. Our next exhibition, *Farms to Suburbs*, explores that transition period and I'd be interested to hear from anyone reading this who has a recollection or thoughts regarding that time.

The exhibition panels in the main bedroom relating to the journey to Australia and the establishment of Westgarthtown, have been redesigned and will be installed soon. It is the first stage of a general redesign and update of the permanent exhibitions which will continue over the upcoming months.

We continue to draw visitors from nearby suburbs and across Melbourne but are also developing small online exhibitions. Recently descendant Ange Belôt developed several short videos of descendants' recollections of Ziebell's and Westgarthtown. They are being posted to Facebook over the next few months and are well worth looking at.

So, you can visit physically and smell the roses or virtually and watch some descendants' Westgarthtown recollections.

My wife and I are heading overseas for a few weeks. People ask me what I am visiting. My response is gardens, the Museum of the Home, the Migration Museum, some other museums and maybe some more gardens. What else is there!

Have a great Spring,  
Gordon



# Tours Report

BY JOHN FRY, TOURS COORDINATOR

As usual this year we have had an eclectic mixture of groups visiting Ziebell's Farmhouse. There have been various Probus groups, senior citizens' organisations and organized tours from bus companies.

What I shall describe as a 'quirky' group was the Victorian Costumes Guild. They arrived by car, but all were in period costumes. I spoke to one lady who had driven all the way from Mornington in full period dress; that's what I call commitment. The men were dressed up as well and there was even a young boy in knickerbockers. Of course morning tea had to be served in china cups as befitted the occasion

We continue to get return visits from various schools as we fit neatly into the curriculum, from grades 2/3 at Primary School, to VCE German language classes in schools like Wesley Grammar, Westbourne Grammar, Viewbank College and a language class all the way from Geelong. This is an area where I see the potential for much growth in the future.

So far this year we have had over 320 visitors on organized tours. I expect the numbers to increase as we enter the Spring months and the garden blossoms into its full beauty.



Members of the Victorian Costumes Guild in Ziebell's Farmhouse Garden (Gordon Johnston).

# The Thomas family of Thomastown

BY ROB WUCHATSCH

*Thomastown is named after the Thomas family. The irony is they weren't the first European settlers there and their real surname wasn't Thomas. John Thomas was born as John Honniball in Somerset, England in 1788, but changed his surname sometime before he and his family emigrated in 1841.*

*The area covered by Thomastown was first known by Europeans as either Merri Creek or Darebin Creek, but by the late 1840s it was referred to as Keelbundora, after the land parish in which it is located. By 1850, it had become known as Dry Creek, an early name for Edgars Creek. The name Thomastown dates from 1854/55. Westgarthtown also had several early names. Like Thomastown, it was initially known as Keelbundora and Dry Creek; occasionally as the German Colony; by some residents as Neu Mecklenburg, then from 1856 as Westgarthtown. It was also sometimes referred to as Germantown, but this was usually by outsiders and confusing, as another town near Geelong was officially named Germantown (now Grovedale).*

*By the early 1900s Thomastown and Westgarthtown had effectively merged and the Wesleyan/Methodist and Lutheran communities were both considered to be part of Thomastown. The post office, school, hotel, store, bootmaker, blacksmith and railway station were all located in the Wesleyan/Methodist area of Thomastown.*

*When the Thomas family took ownership of their land in Section 22, Parish of Keelbundora in 1853, the area had already been occupied for 15 years by tenant farmers (see Friends of Westgarthtown Newsletter of April 2023). So why was Thomastown named after the Thomas family?*

John Thomas, his wife Mary (née Hartnell) and children Joseph, Francis, Alfred and Mary Ann arrived in Melbourne as bounty immigrants from Bristol aboard the *Ward Chipman* on 16 December 1841. Eldest son, John Hartnell Thomas, followed in 1852.

The Thomas family were actually the Honniball family. John Honniball was born in 1788 at Oake, a small village near Taunton, in Somerset. John was the son of Joseph Honniball, a prominent local citizen. Joseph was a church warden, overseer of the poor, land tax assessor and highway surveyor who apparently prospered during the Napoleonic Wars and owned several farms in Somerset and Devon. However, during the economic depression which followed the Napoleonic Wars he was thrown into Debtors' Prison at Ilchester in 1822 for not paying his bills and died there soon after. Son John was imprisoned there at the same time for the same reason.

John Honniball and Mary Hartnell married in 1815 and lived in various villages near Taunton until they emigrated to Australia. Their first child John Hartnell Honniball was born in 1817, followed in 1819 by Frederick, who died young, Joseph in 1820, Francis in 1823, Alfred in 1833 and Mary Ann in 1837. By the time John decided to emigrate to Australia in 1841, he had changed his surname to Thomas, presumably because of the family's previous debt problems and his imprisonment in 1822.

The Thomas family travelled as government assisted passengers, but John, Mary, Alfred and Mary Ann were denied bounty status on arrival in Melbourne because John was older than 40 and therefore ineligible. Sons Joseph and Francis, aged 21 and 19 respectively and labourers, appear to have been accepted. Joseph and Francis gave their address as Glamorgan in Wales, suggesting they had previously moved from Somerset, possibly to find work.



According to their descendants, the Thomas family were initially market gardeners on the Yarra River at Studley Park in Kew, but gave this up after being flooded out twice and losing their crops. During the mid 1840s they were recorded as living at Collingwood, but at some stage between then and the early 1850s, some members of the family moved to what became known as Thomastown.

John Thomas and son Francis officially became landowners at Thomastown on 18 January 1853, having paid John McKenzie £689 for 212 acres in Section 22. Each paid £344/10/- and received 106 acres. Their land, bisected by the Edgars Creek, was located on the west side of the road from Melbourne to Epping. John's 106 acres extended from today's Spring Street to just south of Newton Street and Francis' between today's Main and Spring Streets.

Section 22 in the Parish of Keelbundora had not been put up for sale by the Government until 1848. It was sold at auction in Melbourne on 27 September 1848 to speculators Joseph Hall, James Gibbon and John McKenzie for £1,113. They received title to Section 22 on 24 November 1848 and in April 1849 partitioned the 636 acres among themselves, with John McKenzie receiving the northernmost 212 acres. This transaction was completed in November 1849.

Joseph Hall sold his 424 acres in Section 22 to two Irishmen. He sold 144 acres to Peter McCoy for £468 on 12 April 1850 and title passed to McCoy on 23 June 1851 suggesting he had paid Hall by then. McCoy established his Belmont Farm and Hotel on this land. Hall sold his remaining 280 acres to Michael Mahoney for £840. Hall conveyed the land to Mahoney, who had occupied it for three years, on 22 November 1852 and it soon became known as Kilmurry Farm. Mahoney had previously leased a farm at Merrilands from 1845–49.

It is not known when the Thomas family first settled at Thomastown. A possible indication is the birth of Francis Thomas' son Francis Henry in April 1849. His birthplace was recorded as Darebin Creek, but this may or may not have been Thomastown, as the Thomas family bible records Francis Henry's birthplace as Collingwood where Francis Thomas had married Margaret Craig in 1846.

Definite evidence of the Thomas family living at or near Thomastown is the birth of Joseph Thomas' daughter Louisa at Dry Creek on 27 October 1850. The name Dry Creek specifically related to the Thomastown area. When Joseph married Ann Hawkins in September 1849, his address had been given as Kingstown, an early name for Major Davidson's Merrilands Estate, through which the Dry Creek ran. Louisa's birthplace thus confirms members of the Thomas family had lived at Thomastown since at least 1850. The price paid by John and Francis Thomas for their land – £3/5/- per acre – was a pre-gold rush valuation, suggesting they had lived on their land since at least 1850.

In 1853 John Thomas sold 56 acres west of the Edgars Creek to George Dyer, a fellow *Ward Chipman* passenger, for £175. Spring Street was created by the Thomas family as an access road and presumably named after a spring at the Edgars Creek. John, who may never have lived permanently at Thomastown, died at Smith Street, Collingwood on 30 October 1855 aged 67 and was buried the following day at 'Thomas Town'. He is believed to have been the first person buried in the Wesleyan Cemetery.

John's wife Mary died on 6 April 1859 aged 67, however, it is not clear where she died or was buried. Her death certificate records her place of death as Northcote and burial location as McLean's Cemetery (today's Preston Cemetery), but her death notice in the *Argus* states she died at her son's home at Thomastown. It seems likely Mary's death certificate details are incorrect and she died at Thomastown and was buried there with her husband. Following Mary's death, John Thomas' remaining 50 acres was partitioned between their sons John Jr., Joseph, Francis and Alfred.

Francis Thomas' 106 acres was located between today's Main and Spring Streets. Late in 1853 he conveyed 71 acres west of the Edgars Creek to his brother Joseph and then set about selling much of his remaining land to market gardeners, shopkeepers and tradesmen.

We are fortunate to have been left a wonderfully evocative account of an 1853 visit to Thomastown by Samuel King, who recalled in 1902:

On Christmas Day 1853, we went to Thomastown. My friend, George Standing, preached in Mr Francis Thomas' home – or rather, it was a slab hut with a dirt floor, fairly furnished. Here we had our first Christmas dinner in Australia. We had roast bullock's heart, green peas, potatoes etc. Mr Cooper, a grand old local preacher, had recently landed, & was living with Mr Thomas. We had a grand time that day.

The Thomas family were devout Wesleyans and in 1854 Francis made an acre of land available for £100 for the erection of a Wesleyan church and school building. This was built during 1854 on the front half of the block, which faced the Epping Road, with a cemetery laid out at the rear. Church services commenced in late 1854 and the school opened in 1855.

From 1853 until the early 1870s, Francis progressively subdivided and sold blocks of land to buyers such as Richard Batchelor, John Bishop, Christopher Bowker, Richard Clinnick, Joseph Cooper, Thomas Gammage, Robert Goodman, Moses Leggett, David McClure, Elizabeth and Mary McGovern, James Olney, Andrew Prissall and Joseph Sansom. Almost all these people were English and most Wesleyan. Some were shopkeepers and tradesmen who lived along the Epping Road but most were market gardeners. Some remained at Thomastown for the rest of their lives but others soon sold out and moved away.

Francis Thomas' house and market garden was located on the east bank of the Edgars Creek between Main (known as German Lane until the 1920s) and Spring Streets. During the 1850s and 1860s Francis also let some of his land to brothers Benjamin and Stephen Johnson who established a large garden known as the Northampton Nurseries.

Francis was active in community affairs and local politics. As well as being a lay reader and trustee of the Wesleyan Church, he served on the Epping District Roads Board during the 1850s and 1860s; was a councillor for the Shire of Jika in 1871–72; and a magistrate from 1873. During the 1860s he and his brothers were also members of the Pentridge Volunteer Rifles at Coburg.

Francis lived at Preston during the 1870s, then after becoming insolvent, moved to Ascot Vale, before retiring to Doncaster where he died in 1910. He is buried at Box Hill. His wife Margaret predeceased him in 1901. A grandson, Fred Thomas, who attended Thomastown Primary School during the 1880s and 1890s, was ordained as a Presbyterian minister and served as a Foreign Missionary in Korea from 1916–22 as well as various parishes in Victoria and Tasmania. He was also Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania in 1932.

Francis' eldest brother Joseph initially farmed his 71 acres on the west side of the Edgars Creek. He also owned a market garden on eight acres near the north-west corner of today's High and Newton Streets. After losing the farm in a mortgagee's sale in 1867 and becoming insolvent, Joseph and his wife Ann moved to their market garden where they raised a large family. Joseph died there in 1907 and is buried at Thomastown and Ann died at Oaklands in New South Wales in 1921. A daughter Florence married Jack Grützner and lived on that family's farm at Westgarthtown until the 1950s.

Youngest brother Alfred farmed 320 acres of land in Section 14, Parish of Keelbundora (today's Keon Park) which he leased from Robert Campbell Jr. It was

known as Darebin Farm. Alfred married Christina McLeod in 1851 and took over the lease of the farm from his father-in-law Alexander McLeod when the McLeod family moved to Broadford. Alfred also acquired some land on the south-west corner of High and Spring Streets, as part of the 1859 Thomas family partition, but sold it later that year to Edward Perry and George Rayner.

Alfred and Christina Thomas raised a large family at Darebin Farm. After 50 years there they retired into the township of Thomastown. Alfred died in 1913 and is buried at Thomastown with Christina, who died in 1909. Alfred and Christina's sons Alfred Jr., Alex, Bill and Jack continued market gardening at Thomastown into the 1920s and 1930s. Their sister Elizabeth and her husband Ben Sheffield were also market gardeners at Thomastown until the 1940s. Other sisters Christina, Mary and May married local farmers James McKimmie, William Dyer and David Mann and also lived at Thomastown. Two of their children – Colin McKimmie and Fred Dyer – were killed in France during the First World War.

John and Mary Thomas' eldest son John Hartnell Thomas, an ironworks puddler who had lived in South Wales for over ten years, is believed to have arrived in Australia aboard the *Mobile* in October 1852. He was followed by his wife Mary and their children who came on the *Birmingham* in January 1854. In September 1855 John purchased a small block of land on the corner of today's High and Newton Streets, then in 1859 received 16 acres near the south-western end of Spring Street, Thomastown when the Thomas brothers partitioned the land their father had left them. By the early 1860s, however, John Hartnell Thomas had let his land in Spring Street to Thomas Prescott and moved to Bendigo, where Mary died in 1865. Later that year John remarried to Mary Phillips and in 1869 sold his land at Thomastown to Edmund Sheffield Sr. for £150. John died at Bendigo in 1891 and is buried at Kangaroo Flat.

In 1855 John and Mary Thomas' youngest child Mary Ann, then living at Collingwood, married her cousin John Featherstone, a drayman. After living at Thomastown they moved to Bendigo, where John conducted a carrying business and livery stables, then finally a horse stud. He died in 1913 at Quarry Hills and is buried at Bendigo but Mary, who died at Hawthorn in 1916, is buried at Thomastown with other members of the Thomas family.

Thomastown was not an officially planned village. As at Westgarthtown, its name was bestowed by its residents, not a Government surveyor. That Thomastown was named after the Thomas family is indisputable. In 1886 Blamires and Smith stated in their book *The Early Story of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Victoria* that Thomastown was 'named after Mr and Mrs J. Thomas.' This claim was supported in 1887 by William Wattie, Thomastown's Head Teacher, who wrote that Alfred Thomas' daughter Elizabeth was a 'grand-daughter of Mr. Thomas, after whom the township was named.' As there were numerous places named Thomastown in Britain and Ireland, the name presumably found ready acceptance among the new village's other residents.

*As well as my own archival, newspaper, internet and field research, I have also included information in this article from Beryl Patullo's 1985 book 130 Years of Schooling: Thomastown 631: 1855–1985 and Joyce Berner's 1990 family history Clues to the past: the story of the Thomas (Honnibal) and Makepeace families. I gratefully acknowledge Beryl and Joyce's detailed research into the Thomas family.*



# Thomastown during the 1850s Gold Rushes

BY ROB WUCHATSCH

Thomastown, including Westgarthtown, was just a crude settlement of temporary homes and farm buildings in July 1851 when it was announced gold had been discovered in Victoria at Clunes. Further discoveries followed at Andersons Creek at Warrandyte, Mount Alexander, Buninyong and Ballarat. A decade of feverish activity and development was about to begin – a decade in which many other goldfields would be found - such as Bendigo and Beechworth. In ten years Victoria's population rose from less than 80,000 to more than half a million.

The effects of the Victorian gold rushes of the 1850s on Thomastown and Westgarthtown were many and varied. For landowners, the value of their properties soared and the increased demand from Melbourne's rapidly rising population meant higher prices for their produce – butter, cheese, hay, fruit, vegetables and eggs. Although farming and gardening at Thomastown began at subsistence levels, output gradually increased until produce was available for sale on a regular basis. By the 1860s fresh milk was also being sold.

## Goldmining

Those seeking immediate riches and/or adventure left for the diggings as fast as they could. Most of Thomastown's goldminers appear to have been Germans. Friedrich Kawerau, a Melbourne architect who owned two acres at Westgarthtown, was among the first to prospect the Daylesford or Jim Crow gold field at Wombat Flat. Friedrich and his brother arrived at Ballarat soon after gold was discovered there, but found it too crowded, so headed north. In December 1851 they moved to Mount Alexander and in January 1853 were reported to be at Campbell's Creek. In 1855, Kawerau sold his land at Westgarthtown to Christian Ziebell for £50, having bought it for £2. The profit reflected the gold rush boom prices in property. All Westgarthtown's land had originally been purchased for £1 per acre.

In 1851, Gottlob Wanke sold his 30 acres at Westgarthtown to Friedrich Gründel for £150 and travelled to the goldfields, but was unsuccessful and settled at Harkaway near Berwick in 1853. Ernst Heyne tried his luck at goldmining, but then sold his 20 acres in 1853 for £55 to neighbour Johann Maltzahn to become the Bendigo agent for the Melbourne Escort Company, a gold carrying business. Julius Groening sold his 67 acres to Christian Kurtzmann in 1853 for £255 and after a short time in Ballarat, moved to Bendigo, where his friend Friedrich Schilling, who had lived with him at Westgarthtown, had settled in 1854. Julius and two other former Westgarthtown residents named Johann Winter and Louis Follgrabe were living at Bendigo in late 1856 when they signed a petition against the introduction of a three-year waiting period for naturalization.

Heinrich Karsten, Christian Ziebell's son-in-law, also took his family to Bendigo during the early 1850s and was a signatory to the 1852 petition by diggers there protesting about the high cost of food and poor condition of the roads from Melbourne. When Christian Ziebell visited Germany in 1855 he took 'a piece of gold and two gold quartz stones' on behalf of his daughter Maria Karsten to present to the wife of her former employer.



Carl and Louis Unmack, who arrived in Australia in 1852, lived at Westgarthtown until 1854, then moved to the Bendigo goldfields. Louis was a miner at Kangaroo Flat when he married Caroline Ziebell in 1863. Gottlieb Knobloch moved to Bendigo in 1857 to operate a boarding house, then ran the Black Eagle and New Chum Hotels. He sold his 30 acres at Westgarthtown to Christian and Friedrich Grosse in 1858 for £450 and during the 1860s he was a goldminer at New Berlin near Inglewood.

Digging on Bendigo Creek, sketch by Ludwig Becker, 1860, from *Ein Australisch' Lied*, Published in *An Australian Song*, by Marjorie Tipping.

Other Germans from Westgarthtown are also said to have prospected for gold. Some probably visited the goldfields several times, returning home when their money ran out or crops needed planting or harvesting. While away, their farms were presumably cared for by the wives and children, with assistance from relatives and neighbours.

Johann Graff Jr.'s quest for gold ended in tragedy at Forest Creek on the Mount Alexander goldfields in December 1852. He had been sleeping when a tree, set alight by a campfire, fell and killed him during the night.

Although some British residents from Thomastown must have tried their luck on the Victorian diggings during the 1850s, I have been unable to identify any. Christopher Bowker, a farmer and blacksmith at Thomastown, is said to have been at Ballarat during the Eureka Uprising in 1854, but not as a digger. However, John Hartnell Thomas moved to Bendigo during the 1860s and became a miner. In 1855 his sister Mary Ann Thomas had married John Featherstone and his stepdaughter Keziah Tilley married a German named Theodore Bormann and both couples later moved to Bendigo.

## Bullock driving

Thomastown and Westgarthtown residents appear to have benefited more from the general prosperity created by the gold discoveries than from mining itself. Some



men worked as bullock drivers, a difficult, risky and often dangerous occupation, but one which could also be profitable. Bullockies were the truckies of the 19th century. As new gold towns were established, virtually all their requirements, with the exception of mutton, had to be carted from Melbourne. The money made by Thomastown and Westgarthtown's bullock drivers from carting to the goldfields was used to pay for land on which most farmed for the rest of their lives.

Bullock wagon and figures, Eugene von Guerard, circa 1850–1860. (State Library of Victoria)

It often cost merchants more to have their goods transported from the nearest Australian seaport to the goldfields than from Europe to Australia. Costs were high for many reasons. The rough bush tracks to the goldfields often went up steep hills or through creeks. In winter, roads were almost impassable and goods sometimes had to be loaded and unloaded several times during a journey, when drays became bogged. The absence of payable return loads also increased costs and cartage rates ranged from £20 per ton in summer to £100 in winter.

In his book *The Tyranny of Distance*, Geoffrey Blainey wrote:

A Victorian parliamentary commission reckoned in September 1854 that consumers on their goldfields were paying £2 million to £3 million a year for the carting of supplies from the coast. That was an immense freight bill; Victorian gold diggers in that year probably received not much more than £7 million for the gold they sold.

Bullockies rarely rode on their vehicles. They usually walked beside their teams, which generally consisted of eight or ten bullocks, two abreast under heavy yokes. Drivers urged their teams on with whips and colourful language. A return trip to the goldfields took several weeks, even in summer, rising to months in winter. Two wheeled drays were preferred to waggons as they could be dragged sideways or swivelled around in boggy patches and could more easily dodge tree stumps or deep ruts. Bullocks were preferable to horses as they required only half the rations, could exist on native grasses and remain in harness longer. They could also be fattened and eaten when they had outlived their usefulness as beasts of burden.

Michael Mahoney was one of the first Thomastown residents to cart to the goldfields. From 1851–53 he was employed 'to convey passengers and luggage per my own drays from Melbourne to Ballarat and Bendigo from which employment I realized a large sum of money amounting to between two thousand pounds and three thousand pounds.' Michael used this money to purchase his farm at Thomastown and build a house and outbuildings.

John King, who lived across the road from Mahoney at Merrilands, or Kingstown as it was sometimes known, carted to the goldfields from 1851–56. Although he was only 12 in 1851, he and another man carried flour to the diggings for his father, Robert King. John had learned to drive bullocks by taking his mother and other women to Melbourne to sell their butter and eggs. They all sat on bags of straw while they travelled. John then carried wood into Melbourne until gold was discovered. In 1853 the King family bought land at Mernda and moved there the following year.



The Thomas brothers are also said to have carted to the diggings, along with their cousin and brother-in-law, John Featherstone. Like Mahoney, the Thomas brothers presumably paid for their land with money earned from carting. Bernard Goss, who arrived from Ireland in 1855, worked as a stone-breaker and farmhand at Thomastown and Epping before purchasing a waggon and bullock team. He carted:

to the diggings at Bendigo, Beechworth, Wangaratta and other mining centres, the price for each trip realizing £100 ... After completing a few trips, Mr. Goss had the misfortune to lose his well selected bullocks, through pleura breaking out amongst them. Returning to Thomastown, almost disheartened over his loss, he started working for wages again, and in a short time was in a position to get a few head of cattle together and rent a small farm at Thomastown.

This 70-acre farm was located in Section 21. Goss later moved to Donnybrook.

Bullock drivers from Westgarthtown included Heinrich Karsten, Daniel Peters, Carl and Johann Wuchatsch Jr. and Michael Zimmer. In March 1854 Karsten advised he was unable to return to Melbourne to take the oath required for naturalization as a Victorian citizen 'in consequence of the loss of his Bullocks and the breaking down of his Dray.'

Other Germans such as Christian Bindt, Johann Lehmann and Michael Zwar, who married women from Westgarthtown, also carted to the goldfields. All these men purchased land at Epping and Wollert with the money they made, with the exception of Zwar, who bought land at Broadford.

Carl Wuchatsch, however, died near Kilmore in December 1856 while returning from one of his trips. The *Kilmore Examiner* reported:

A MISSING MAN – On Saturday last, three Germans, travelling in company, each owning and driving a bullock dray, passed through Kilmore on the way back from the Ovens to their homes on the Plenty...[they] encamped on Mr. William Taylor's ground, near the slab hut. On Sunday morning, the now missing man got up, lit his pipe, and taking the dog with him, went in search of the bullocks. At about ten o'clock the dog returned and since that time the two men have heard no tidings of their mate. They have now been travelling in company these four years.

Almost two weeks later Carl's body was found floating in a water hole in Boyd's Creek. The inquest found no evidence to show how he came to be there.

Daniel Peters, another of Christian Ziebell's sons-in-law, was bullock driving in December 1861 when he had a serious accident. He was returning 'from the Jamieson River with a load of wool when he slipped while coming downhill. The wheel of the dray passed over his knee'. In hospital on 20 December, he was given 'a good stiff glass of Brandy & water then administered Chloroform' and his left leg was amputated above the knee. Six months later he left hospital and returned to Westgarthtown where he remained until his death in 1876. Sylvia Schultz, a Ziebell descendant, recalled hearing stories of a one-legged horseman, presumably Daniel Peters.

# Emma Seeber and her family

BY MELINDA TAM

My great-great-aunt Marie Louise Emma (known as Emma) Nebel was born on 23 August 1860 at Westgarthtown. Her parents were Georg and Friederike (née Born) Nebel who emigrated from Prussia in 1854. Her father was a farmer and shoemaker. Emma was baptised on 7 October 1860 by Pastor Matthias Goethe in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church.

Emma Nebel probably started her education at Westgarthtown Lutheran School in about 1865. Her father was a committee member for the Westgarthtown Lutheran School from at least 1865 to 1866. After she finished her schooling, she was confirmed in the Lutheran Church in 1873.

On 23 September 1884 Emma was married to Friedrich Carl Seeber by Pastor Max Schramm in the Trinity Lutheran Church, East Melbourne. Friedrich Carl (known as Carl or Charles) Seeber was born in 1864 at Epping. His parents were Christian and Sophia (née Seez) Seeber from Wuerttemberg. His father was a farmer at Epping.



Carl's paternal grandmother, four uncles and two aunts also immigrated to Victoria. Seeber family, circa 1862 (Rob Wuchatsch). Three of Carl Seeber's uncles resided at either Westgarthtown or Epping. His aunt Rosina Bormann who also lived at Epping was the second wife of my great-great-grandfather Georg Falk (See *Friends of Westgarthtown Newsletter* December 2019 page 15 and October 2020 page 13).

Carl Seeber was probably baptised by Pastor Matthias Goethe in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church and would have attended Westgarthtown





Lutheran School at Thomastown from about 1869. His last few years of schooling would have been spent at Epping State School which opened in 1874. He was confirmed in the Lutheran Church in 1879.

Possibly Christian Seeber's farm at Epping, circa 1875 (Rob Wuchatsch)..

After their marriage in 1884, Carl and Emma Seeber lived on his father's farm in Cemetery Lane (now O'Hern's Road) at Epping. The farm was 48 acres and part of Lot 4, Section 8, Parish of Wollert. There was a five-roomed stone building with iron roof and lath and plaster partitions on the property in 1903.

Carl and Emma ascertained very early in their marriage they were unable to have children and adopted a baby girl they named Emma Louise Seeber. She was born on 5 November 1886 in Melbourne. They had her baptised at seven weeks old on 24 December 1886 in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church. Carl was described as a farmer living at Epping at this time.

On 18 March 1893 Emma purchased Lots 2, 3 and 4, Section 11, Township of Epping. This was 1 acre 2 roods and 19 perches of land on the south-east corner of High and Coulstock Streets. The property was previously owned by John Nolan, who defaulted on his mortgage to Philip David Phillips, who then sold it to Emma. There were two houses on this property and Carl and Emma may have lived in one of these houses until 1902.

In 1899 Emma's sister-in-law Martha Nebel died after the delivery of a stillborn baby and left her husband with five children under the age of eleven. The three eldest children remained at Thomastown with their father, Wilhelm Nebel, but the two youngest children Hilda and Linda Nebel were raised by Emma Seeber in Epping. Hilda was three-years-old and Linda was 18 months old when their mother died in 1899.

Christian Seeber retired from farming in 1899 and he and Sophia moved into one of Emma's houses in Epping. This had 1.5 acres of land associated with it. Carl and Emma ran his parents' farm until 1902 when Emma's brother Wilhelm Nebel took over the lease.

Christian Seeber died in 27 November 1902 and left his wife Sophia a life interest in his real and personal estate which included the Seeber farm at Epping. In 1902 Carl began renting a house and Lots 1 to 10, Section 6 Township of Epping from M. Walsh. This was five acres in total. The house was located in Rufus Street between Davison Street and the Darebin Creek. Carl's occupation was given as farmer. He rented this house and land until 1918.





Granny Sophia  
Seeber (Rob  
Wuchatsch).

Carl and Emma also rented out the additional house on her property in High Street, Epping. There was a variety of tenants over the years – George Trowell (1903), Nicholas Kelly (1904–1905), John Richards (1906–1907), Laurence Callaghan (1907), C. Anthony (a hairdresser and newsagent) (1908–1909), Frederick Shallard (1909–1910), John Shepherd (1911) and Doherty (1911–1912). Carl's mother Sophia Seeber moved into this house in 1913 and remained there until her death in 1915. The house was advertised to let in 1916 and 1917, described as a four-roomed cottage or house in splendid repair, with a quarter acre of land in healthy surroundings. The rent was 7/- per week in 1917. A number of tenants rented the house after Sophia's death – Smith (1916), Thomas Tinham (1918–1924), Clive Jones (1924) and Joseph Hocking (1927–1929). Carl and Emma may have lived in this house from 1930 and were definitely living there from 1938.

In 1906, Carl and Emma's adopted daughter Emma Louise Seeber (1886–1966), married William Thomas Arthur Shallard. They had four children with two daughters Hilda and Dorothy surviving infancy. William Shallard and his family moved into the house Sophia Seeber had vacated in 1913. This had 1.5 acres of land

associated with it and there were stables located on the block from 1917. William Shallard leased this property until Emma Seeber's death in 1942. William Shallard was a carrier from 1914 to 1920. He was a carrying contractor for the Epping Milk Company/ Metropolitan Milk Company which involved operating stables in Epping and collecting milk from farms using horse drawn milk wagons.

Emma Seeber's father, Georg Nebel, who had died in 1893, left a will leaving the Nebel farm to his wife, Friederike for life. After Friederike Nebel death on 6 June 1915, the Nebel farm was to go to son Wilhelm on condition he paid his siblings the sum of £200 each. Wilhelm Nebel took possession of the Nebel farm on 4 August 1917 and Emma would have received £200 at that time.

Carl's mother Sophia Seeber died in 8 June 1915, two days after the death of Emma's mother. Christian left his wife Sophia Seeber a life interest in his real and personal estate which included the Seeber farm, valued at £480 in 1902. The personal property included one cow valued at £5, furniture valued at £15 and £205 in bank accounts. After her death the remaining estate was to go to younger son Carl on condition that within six months he paid his brother Christian Seeber £10, his brother's wife Louisa Seeber £10 and his adopted daughter Emma Seeber £200 (this was to be in two instalments – one on her 25th birthday and another on her 30th birthday). Carl would have paid his adopted daughter £100 on the settlement of the estate and another £100 on 5 November 1916. Carl took possession of the Seeber farm on 19 February 1916 and owned it until 20 July 1926 when he sold it to Arthur Lehmann. The farm was rented to Lucy Stevens from 1916 to 1918 and Lehmann in 1920.

On 15 July 1915 Emma mortgaged her Epping property to Thomas Brophy. She paid out the mortgage on 20 April 1920 and on 9 August 1920 Carl purchased two shops in High Street, Epping from the estate of Ernestine Vockensohn. This was Allotment 10, Section 16, Township of Epping. The land size was 2 roods and 25 perches. Carl and Emma lived in one shop and the other shop was rented out to a variety of tenants such as Hul Charley (?)(1921), Wilfred Walter King (1924), their nephew-in-law Ernest Flanders (1925–1926), Jack Croby (1927) and Stanley Marsh (1928–1929). On 20 April 1938 Carl sold the shops to his grandson-in-law George Jeffery.

Linda Nebel married Rudolph Norman Young in 1924 and Hilda Nebel married Ernest Edward Flanders in 1925. Hilda Flanders had five children, her eldest daughter Myrtle Miriam Flanders born on 3 December 1925. Hilda appears to have been unable to cope with so many children and eldest daughter Myrtle was raised by her great aunt Emma Seeber from the time she was a young child.

On 20 February 1925 Emma subdivided the land she owned – Lots 2, 3 and 4, Section 11, Township of Epping. The land was divided into six lots. Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 faced High Street. Lots 1 and 2 were vacant land; Lot 3 had a brick house on it where her daughter Emma Shallard and family lived; and Lot 4 had a weatherboard house which was rented out. Carl and Emma Seeber later lived there. Lots 5 and 6 faced Coulstock Street. Lot 5 was vacant land and Lot 6 had a weatherboard house where her niece Linda Young and her family lived.

Carl and Emma Seeber were members of both the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church and St John's Church of England at Epping, where Carl is known to have served as a vestryman in 1910 and 1935–1936. In June 1935, there was dissension



George Jeffery's  
army photo, 1940  
(National Archives  
Australia).



in the congregation of the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church after Trinity Lutheran Church, East Melbourne joined the German Protestant Church. Carl Seeber was one of nine members of the congregation who signed a letter on 19 June 1935 stating they had no objections to Pastor Steiniger and the services conducted by him at Thomastown. On 28 July 1935 a vote by ballot was held and the congregation voted to remain allied with Trinity Lutheran Church.

Carl had donated £1 towards Pastor Herlitz's 1892 salary in February 1892; 2/6 to the Children's Hospital; 5/- to All Saints' Church of England Preston Vicarage Fund; and £1 as well as vegetables to St. John's Church of England Epping Harvest Festival. Carl also paid for a stall at the Epping State School Patriotic Fundraiser during World War 1. Emma donated 4/- to the Patriotic Fund – Red Cross Society and 3/- and refreshments to the Australian Sick and Wounded Soldiers' Fundraiser.

Emma Seeber died on 19 April 1942 at a private hospital in Heidelberg aged 81 and was buried at Westgarthtown. She left a will dated 29 April 1937 and her executor was grandson-in-law George Jeffery. Emma owned Lots 2, 3 and 4, Section 11, Township of Epping which had been subdivided into six lots and valued at £960. She also owned furniture and household effects valued at £10. Lots 1 and 2 which were vacant land were half left to her great niece Miriam Flanders and the other half equally between her granddaughters Hilda Jeffery and Dorothy Head (transferred 29 June 1949). Lot 3 which included a 50-year-old brick cottage with iron roof, containing four rooms and in a bad state of repair, was left for life to her daughter Emma Shallard, then for life to son-in-law William Shallard and then equally to her granddaughters Hilda Jeffery and Dorothy Head (transferred 14 September 1966). Lot 4 which included a more than 50-year-old weatherboard cottage with iron roof, lined with lining boards, containing four rooms and in a poor state of repair, was left for life to husband Carl Seeber and then to niece Hilda Flanders (transferred 9 May 1947). Lots 5 and 6 which included a 20-year-old weatherboard cottage with iron roof, lined with lining boards, containing four rooms and in a fair state of repair, were left equally to her great nephews and niece, Norman, Reginald, Rollin, Lancelot and Valerie Young, the children of her deceased niece Linda Young (transferred 21 April 1965). The cottage was leased to nephew-in-law Norman Young for his lifetime. Emma's personal property was to be held in trust for her daughter Emma Shallard.

In 1942 Carl Seeber was collecting and living off the rent from the two houses he had sold to his grandson-in-law George Jeffery, as he objected to applying for the old age pension. The owner, George Jeffery was serving overseas with the Railways Unit and his wife Hilda Jeffery was living at Derrinallum. The rates were in arrears on both properties. The amount outstanding was £108/16/1 and the Shire of Whittlesea intended to take steps to procure the rent from the houses to pay off the arrears of rates.

Carl Seeber did not long survive his wife and died on 19 September 1942 at Heidelberg House, a private hospital in Heidelberg, aged 78. He was buried with Emma in the Westgarthtown Cemetery.

Carl's father Christian Seeber and his family are remembered in Epping with Seeber Street named after them.



(Photo by Albert Tam).



## FRIENDS OF WESTGARTHTOWN *Newsletter*

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Design Richard Francis

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### THOMASTOWN LUTHERAN CHURCH SERVICES

Services are held on the fourth Sunday of the month at 2.30 pm at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, German Lane, Lalor. For further details, see the Calvary Lutheran Church website at [www.greensborough.lutheran.org.au](http://www.greensborough.lutheran.org.au).

### VISITING ZIEBELL'S FARMHOUSE MUSEUM AND HERITAGE GARDEN

Ziebell's Farmhouse is open on Sunday 10:30 am–3 pm and Tuesday 11.30 am–2 pm.

For enquiries, call 0418 552 557 (Gordon's mobile) or email [gordon.johnston@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:gordon.johnston@whittlesea.vic.gov.au).

Tours can be organised for groups of ten or more people. For information and bookings contact 0418 552 557 or [johnsdfry@gmail.com](mailto:johnsdfry@gmail.com).