

Centenary

of the Amos Family

1821 MARCH 17TH 1921

J. Walsh & Sons Pty. Ltd.

P. 1/32

Centenary of the Amos Family

CELEBRATIONS AT CRANBROOK.

In a young and, comparatively, recently settled country like Tasmania, it has so far fallen to the lot of few families to be able to point to a far stretch of cultivated land and sheep country, well watered by a picturesque, winding stream, and studded with comfortable homesteads set in charming gardens, and shaded with grand old English trees, and proudly say, "Here, nearly a hundred years ago to-day, our forebears began to carve out a home from the virgin bush; on the original lands granted to them our family has lived ever since, and here are our homes to-day ready to welcome you." Such a privilege had the much-respected family of Amos, when the present holders of the properties of Cranbrook, Gala, and Glen Gala, and their children and grandchildren were able, on March 17 last, to invite their relations and friends from far and near to join with them in celebrating the hundredth anni-

versary of the landing of the pioneers of the family in Tasmania, exactly a century ago to the day. To dip into past history for a moment or two, it is interesting to read that James Amos, of Heriot, gentleman, had sons, Adam and John. Adam was born at Melrose, and christened in Melrose Abbey in 1774, followed his father as Adam Amos, of Heriot, married Mary Tate, of Lauder, and in 1809 was given a commission as ensign in the Second Midlothian Regiment by Henry Duke of Buccleuch. The great financial depression which followed the Battle of Waterloo caused the two brothers to migrate to Haverford West, in Wales. On leaving Scotland we read that Adam Amos was given a letter from the Presbytery of Scotland to the following effect:—"Adam Amos, gentleman, of Heriot, is a Presbyterian, a Communicant, and a man it will benefit any good Presbyterian to know." Surely a grand character that to give a man who was destined to become a pioneer, and help to plant a nation in a new land overseas!

In 1820 the brothers Adam and John, hearing that Messrs. Meredith and Archer (names well-known to present-day Tasmanians) had chartered the ship Emerald to convey the first free settlers direct to Van Diemen's Land, decided to throw in their lot with the pioneers, placed on board many of their farming implements and household effects, and filled up vacant spaces with grain. The ship

sailed from Gravesend. Adam brought his wife, four sons and four daughters, the eldest 16, the youngest one year old; and John, his wife, his son James, aged 14, and four daughters, the youngest of whom was aged one year only. After a rough voyage we read that on December 13, 1820, in the exact location named, an island was sighted for the first time by this ship, and called Emerald Island. Hobart Town was reached on the 16th March, and the passengers landed on the 17th. The outward voyage took six months to accomplish, with a stop at Teneriffe and the Cape to break the monotony; nevertheless all the passengers arrived in good health and spirits.

Some time was spent in securing shelter for the families, and then Adam Amos, accompanied by his second son John, and others, after hauling a whaleboat across East Bay Neck and sailing up the East Coast, landed on the shore of Oyster Bay, near the present town of Swansea, and selected land in the untouched bush, on the banks of the Swan River. In recognition of the improvements made by the selectors, they were given in fee simple a free grant from the Crown, a further area of land adjoining the original holding. All this land is at the present day held by their descendants. Of the eight children of Adam Amos two died without issue, the other six left large families, and continue to multiply. John Amos's descendants increased exceedingly, and Alfred Amos, of Cranbrook—the original holding—is now the rep-

resentative of the family. His contemporaries are J. Collins Amos, of Burrenbah, N.S.W., and Norman Amos, Brisbane, both of whom were present, and took part in the celebrations.

Pages might be written about the early days of this pioneer settlement on the Swan River, of the hardships bravely faced by the sturdy settlers from the time they left the dear shores of Gala Wafer in far away Scotland, to the days when comfortable homes rose out of the wilderness, to be named Cranbrook, Gala, and Glen Gala, and Glen Heriot, in memory of home. The land the pioneers had selected was raw bush land covered with dense timber, and they were only amateur woodsmen with nought but pluck, and sturdy arms to help them; they were seventy miles from the nearest settlement, ten miles from the sea, and had no roads at all to carry their produce to the port. They had to find out for themselves the proper seasons for sowing their crops, and the knowledge was gained through failures that at times well-nigh meant starvation. Bushrangers were a constant menace, and for weeks at a time the workers in the clearing had loaded guns beside them all day, and slept but ill at night when the gangs were out. The natives were also for years a great source of worry, and no unarmed man was ever safe in the bush around the settlement.

As an instance of the scarcity of food in the district at times, the writer was informed by Mr. Alfred Amos that when the first baby girl was born there was no flour in the house, and none to be procured in the neighbourhood, and at last some ships' biscuits were obtained from Cambria, Mr. George Meredith's home, some miles away. Think of that, ye pampered city dwellers of to-day, and raise your hats in a silent salute to the men and women of a bygone day who sowed in tears that we might reap in joy!

Much more might be written of these early days, but space is limited, and we must get down to the present day. As would be expected of good Scots, and worthy sons of the Kirk, quite early in the days of their pioneering the Amos families set about the raising of funds to build a Kirk at Cranbrook, and largely through their efforts, and as a lasting monument to their tireless energy, the church, now affectionately called the "Gala Kirk," was built, and over the porch is carven the date, 1845. It is a staunch, well-built little edifice, a worthy House of God, and in its shadow lie many who saw it in the building, and worshipped in it, in the days "lang syne." There, on the sunny afternoon of March 17, a large congregation gathered to worship God, and do honour to the memory of the pioneers as the first act of the celebrations. The Moderator of the Presbyterian Assembly, Right Rev.

A. G. Roy, conducted the service, assisted by Mr. Dykes, of Swansea district, and a most inspiring service it was, with old hymns heartily sung, and simple prayers that touched the heart, and an address from the Moderator that for manly simplicity of language, and tender reference to the founders of the settlement, and their self-denying labours, their sorrows and their joys, and, above all, the vision splendid that led them on, could not well have been improved upon. To many it seemed a great pity that such an address could not be preserved and read to the boys and girls of our schools sometimes, to remind them of what men and women of their race had dared and done in order to make Tasmania a safe home for those who followed after.

During the service the Moderator called upon Mr. Alfred Amos to read some most interesting letters about the early days, and afterwards the two members of the family who had travelled from other States to be present, and represent both sides of the family, unveiled the memorial tablet raised to the memory of the pioneers. The tablet, which has been placed in a conspicuous position on the wall of the Kirk behind the pulpit, is a handsome piece of work, the carving of which reflects great credit on Mrs. Charles Payne, of Hobart. In the centre of a blackwood panel is depicted the good ship Emerald in full sail, and on either side is a gilt inscription explaining the existence of the tablet, while below there runs the

carven text, "He bringeth them to their desired Haven."

At the close of the service the members of the Amos family who were present signed their names to a parchment record of the day's proceedings, which was to be sealed up and opened by the members of the family who should take part in the bi-centenary celebrations, and then all present were invited to afternoon tea at Cranbrook. Here, amid a busy throng, in and about a fine old house, it was hard to picture the place as it must have been a hundred years ago, but facing one was the old brick mill with its silent wheel, and in the garden were oak-trees that decades upon decades must have known, and farther away the sun that was sinking behind the blue tiers that were "terra incognita" to the pioneers, lighted the walls of the Kirk, and the graves beside it, with their silent dead. As a youthful member of the clan, Amos had chosen to make his entry into the family circle a convenient time beforehand, he was christened by the Moderator in the drawing-room, in the presence of a large number of interested guests.

In the evening a large bonfire was lighted on the cricket ground, and fireworks delighted the younger generation, while their elders looked on, and, perchance, talked much and thought more of other days and scenes and faces that were gone.

To the Pioneers

(Cranbrook, Gala, Glen Gala),

1821—March 17th—1921

You were bred in Bonnie Scotland, in the land o' loch and heather;

You played by Gala waterside—ah! name that draws the heart!

But you heard a strong voice calling you to fare the road together,

And to-day you sleep from Gala-side a wide half-world apart.

Did you dream o' grand adventures? Did you fret because o' living

The ordered life and civilised, where all was understood?

Did they tell you o' the chances that a wilder land was giving,

To men of bone and sinew, with a drop o' fighting blood?

Or did you see a vision, with a grandeur that was golden,
Of adversities to conquer, of a wilderness to tame;

Of new homesteads to be builded? Did a thought your heart embolden,

There let us plant a people that shall bear the Amos name?

What matter now the reason that first led you to the
faring,

Of half a year of ocean voyage, and perils o' the deep;
There's a newer generation here, and little they'll be
caring

For the reasons that lie buried where they laid you
down to sleep.

"Tis enough that we can gather from the fragments o' your
story,

That you penned for us in letters that are blotted wi'
your tears;

Or radiant with successes, we can find enough to glory
In remembering our kinsfolk, you who were our
pioneers.

You were very men whose pulses at the sight o' danger
quickened,

You were men who never faltered when the crops were
poor and lean;

When toil seemed well nigh endless, and the weary body
sickened,

You faced the days God-fearing with a confidence
serene.

You may never know the laurels that the years are slowly
bringing,

You who never dreamed your woman lives would e'er
inspire a pen;

Were ever lives more worthy, though, to set the singers
singing?

Dear staunch, brave hearts so worthy to be mated wi'
such men.

Lonely woman-hearts that faltered in the hours o' sudden
danger,

When the time o' travail met you, and the mother
anguish grew;

Did you see a sudden vision of a Mother and a Man-
ger?

Did the God-man who was lonely come and minister
to you?

Ah! priceless men and women of a bygone genera-
tion,

Who builded for the future, recking not the price you
paid;

Do you ken the seeds you planted men are calling now a
Nation?

Do you see them building cities in the fields your
labours made?

From Swansea town to Cranbrook now the coast road goes
a-winding;

And where you toiled the steaming teams wi' bales o'
fleeces come,

Where bridges span the rivers your old fords are hard
o' finding,

And where your tracks lay darkest, there are gleaming
lights o' home.

Yet you have left us plenty, tho' we sometimes find for-
getting

Is easier than recalling, to recall the past to-day;
For when I rode thro' Cranbrook as the Autumn sun was
setting,

I found the way lay open to a land where fancies play.

By Gala Kirk I halted, for methought I heard you saying
The creed you brought from Scotland in the House your
hands have made;
I crept across the Kirk yard, and you stood within a-praying;
A sturdy band that years agone were in the Kirk yard
laid.

I wandered thro' the twilight, till I came beside the
river;
Before me rose the mill you built; the wheel seemed
locked in sleep;
The evening breeze in passing set the leaf tongues all
a-quiver,
On trees you planted years agone—'tis well their watch
they keep.

Night fell, and from the homesteads rang a sound o' merry
laughter:
Lights flashed from open casements, there were voices
raised in song:
I harkened to the words they sang, and in the silence
after,
I heard your ghostly voices sound the empty roads
along.

Ah! brave hearts, little guessed they that you watch'd
with fond eyes streaming—
This younger generation that is reaping where you
sowed;
Do they ken they are your debtors on a scale beyond all
dreaming?
Do they ever pause to thank you as they pass along
the road?

God grant that some at Cranbrook with a love that's past
forgetting,

Will stand there in the Kirk yard at the falling o' the
dew;

When o'er the tiers that you have loved the fiery sun is
setting,

And thank their God that they are sprung from kins-
men such as you.

And giving thanks may pledge them, with a high and bold
endeavour,

That as your days were bravely spent, so theirs' may be
the same;

Then down the years your watching eyes, unto the Great
Forever,

Shall light at sight o' kinsmen, who are worthy o' their
name.

J. H. GOULD.

27/3/1921.

