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Foundation Documents 1850-1851

**Extracts from the diary of Mary Thomas (junior), 1839-1846  
PRG 160/6**

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**Extracts from the Diary of Mary Thomas b.1823-1881.**

**Mary was the daughter of Robert and Mary Thomas, and later the second wife of J. M. Skipper.**

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We are obliged to print the proclamations at Glenelg in a rush hut that had been built for a bedroom for the use of my sisters and myself. Mama, my sisters and myself came to live in Adelaide on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 1837. Our rush printing hut was just taken possession of by some natives, who had an encampment just above us. My father and brothers were generally in Adelaide about this time, but two gentlemen of the names of Skipper and Powys resided with us in the day time. On the first of June Helen and I were brought to us in a dray drawn by eight bullocks. Mama, Frances, Messrs. Skipper and Powys walked, accompanied by our large wallaby dog, purchased of the people on Kangaroo Island. We once more took to living in a tent and continued to do so until September [1837], when we began to occupy some apartments adjoining the printing office, having lived in tents and reed huts from November 1836 till September 1837. Our first week in Australia was passed in a tent formed by a piece of canvas thrown across some poles, and the back filled in by green boughs. The second place we had was a large marquee – very comfortable – where we passed Christmas Day. The printing office was built of reeds (from the lagoons) and pine poles, tied together by yarn. There was an earthquake felt here in the winter of 1837.

While living at Holdfast Bay we cooked a goanna, which looked white and delicate as a rabbit. On another occasion I visited the hut of a neighbour and saw a black snake cut up and ready for being dressed. During our residence at Holdfast Bay we lived principally on salt meats and wild fowl, which consisted of cockatoos, parrots and quail. Once we dined off an emu, which our wallaby dog helped to run down, and another time a crane was included among our delicacies. Kangaroo tail makes a fine soup, and I believe wallaby and bandicoot are both good, but black swan is coarse.

Aug. 11, 1839. I am four feet eleven inches and one quarter in height. Age nearly sixteen.

[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – Aug.11, 1839: Miss Mary Thomas (the second Mrs. J. M. Skipper) lived until 1883. her hair remained thick, dark brown and long all her life.]

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Oct. 10? This day poor Colonel Light was buried. We went to see the funeral. My brother Robert, having been one of his partners, was a chief mourner, and my father [Robert Thomas] joined the procession. We all went in mourning for him.

Oct. 19. Papa took Helen and me to see the foundation stone laid of St. John's church. The stone was laid by Col. Gawler and the service was read by Mr. Howard.

Oct. 12. I went to see the Botanical Gardens today. They are delightfully situated on the banks of the River Torrens.

Nov. 19. Frances and I drank tea at Dr. Wright's this evening in the company of Mr. Arthur Gliddon, Mr. Henry Smith and two of Dr. Wright's sons, Robert and Septimus. Mr. Skipper saw us home.

Nov. 28. We went to the No.1 Sheep Station, distant about 7 miles from Adelaide. We took some refreshment of the banks of the River Sturt, called at Mr. Taylor's farm near the Sturt, and returned to Adelaide in the evening.

Dec. 27. Rhantregwnwyn Cottage [Hindley Street] is nearly finished and is to be our future residence, Frances, Helen, and I slept there this night for the first time. The workmen were papering one of the parlors all night, because my sister's wedding is to be kept there and we are pressed for time. We have been busy all day in cleaning silver, glass, and china for the party tomorrow.

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[1840]

Jan. 11. A dinner was given to Colonel Gawler to commemorate the foundation of the colony. Mr. Lazarus illuminated his shop. The device was G G surmounted by a crown. This was the first time that anything of this sort was exhibited here.

Feb.17. The digging of our well began today.

Feb. 29. Our well diggers have come to beautiful water.

Mar. 2. John [Skipper] took a view of the stone house and our pise cottage for Mama to send to England.

Mar. 4. Mama received her bacon from the Port that my Uncle George had sent from South Hampton.

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Mar. 16. Frances commenced moving into her new house in Waymouth Street.

Mar. 17. The Adelaide Chronicle came out today for the first time since it has been in our hands. Mama has just commenced employing a German washer woman; washing 3/- the dozen.

Mar. 24. There are at this time the following persons employed in the office of the South Australian Register:- My brother William, Mr. William (senior clerk), Daniel Higgins, Thomas Higgins, Mr. Bonnar, Mr. Halliday, John Foreman, Little George Foreman, Mr. Brock (press-man), Mr. Connelly (press-man), and a clerk under Mr. Williams, William Hillier, Mr. Bennet, William Hay, Henry Curran, Astley Cooper (boy), Lindsay Cooper (boy), and Abraham Brookes (bill sticker).

Mar. 31. Dr. Wright came down to see my throat and said it was not so bad, but that he wished to consult Mr. Woodforde as it was a surgical case [in this diary Mary often mentions trouble with her throat. It is possible she suffered all her life from an infected throat or tonsillitis]. The Adelaideans say that there was another earthquake at 10 o'clock last night.

Apr. 1. The earthquakes of Monday [March 30] were severely felt by some people, but I do not think that there was any great damage done beyond the shaking down of an old rickety wall at the Southern Cross Hotel and the breakage of some glasses.

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May 24. Queen's birthday. We hoisted the St. George's cross ensign on the top of the new house.

May 25 The blacks had a dinner given to them at the Government grounds. Frances, Helen, John, Robert and I went to see them and spent an agreeable afternoon. Mr. Lazarus had a very good illumination in the evening, and some others shoed very miserable transparencies.

July 21. A very cold day indeed, with a fall of snow, which is a novelty in Australia.

July 28. Mama, Papa, Frances, Helen, John, and I went to a party at Mr. Solomon's this evening. We danced in the large store and sat down to a very pretty supper in the dining room.

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Aug. 10. Francis Mitchell took possession of John O' Groat's [situated on acre 56, next to the SA Register office. The property was owned by Mrs. Mary Thomas].

Aug. 30. The whole of my own family and two or three friends dined with us today as it is Mama's birthday and mine. I am 17 years of age.

Sep. 20. Mr. Talbot who was one of the apprenticed seamen of the Africaine called on Mama and stayed to tea with us. He is now master of the schooner Waterwitch.

Oct. 9. Mama, Frances, Helen, John, and I have received invitations from Mr. MacLaren to see the New Port opened on Wednesday next.

Oct. 14. Very hot and dusty this morning, besides wind and rain in the evening. Helen and I went with Papa and Mrs. Blyth to the South Australian Bank, which was the general place of meeting for those who intended to visit the New Port. Helen and I were put into a yellow wagon filled with people and proceeded with a long line of carriages and horsemen in the direction of the Port, until our traces broke and we broke from the cavalcade. After some time spent in repairs we arrived safely at our destination, and Helen and I very opportunely found Mrs. Wright, who kindly took charge of us on finding we were alone, as Papa had not then

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found us. It had been arranged that Mrs. Blyth was to have us under her care, but we missed her at the Bank. The ceremony of opening the Port was performed by Mrs. Gawler, who landed a chest of tea from a vessel alongside the wharf. After that was over, a very large number of ladies and gentlemen, among whom were ourselves, adjourned to the Company's (SA Company) rooms to partake of a handsome cold collation. The place was built for a warehouse and in a style which I think highly creditable for these early times. Our dining room was prettily decorated with flowers. The scene in the evening, after the feasting, etc. was all over, but previously before our return to Adelaide, was incredible. Such a confusion of men. Women, bullock carts, noise and novelty as I had never witnessed in Australia before. Helen and I were [then] comfortable stowed along with Mr. Skipper in a stage coach, when we returned to Adelaide; but most of the others must have been exposed to the storm of dust and rain with which we were visited.

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Nov. 12. We have heard today that the government printing is divided between Messrs. MacDougall and Dehane. MacDougall has published his first Gazette under the title of South Australian Government Gazette and, expecting in name, it is as near as he can make it like ours.

Nov. 14. Today was published in the South Australian Register the whole of the correspondence between Papa and the Governor. The paper was increased to half a sheet over for the first time since its enlargement, and it sold rapidly.

Dec. 23. Today there was a Scotch wedding kept at John O' Groat's. Some of the people wore highland dresses.

[1841]

Jan. 11. Mr. Solomon's new theatre [word omitted] for the first time this evening. John, Robert, Helen, and I went, but were obliged to sit in the dress circle because John applied too late for private boxes. William went in the gallery. The opening piece was Othello and the concluding one Our Mary Anne. The acting was very good for the place and Arabin's Iago was splendidly performed. Mr. Lazar is very clever and his daughter's dancing is very tolerable. The theatre was crowded with respectable people

and we were highly entertained. The performances lasted till one o'clock in the morning owing to the delay between acts.

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Feb. 8. We have heard that England is either at war or about to be with France and that through a French spy Plymouth Dock-yard and three English line of battleships have been burnt.

Feb. 10. John, Helen and I went to a concert held at the Company's [SA Company] buildings in Rundle Street. The room was large and completely crowded. The music was very good and the overture to Masaniello beautiful.

Feb. 16. Robert's birthday. Mama gave a dinner party to celebrate my brother's coming of age. The company consisted of Messrs. Mann, Stevenson, Kingston, and Woodforde. Mrs. Stevenson, Mrs. Gorton Mama, my sisters, brothers, William Hillier and myself. We dined in the parlor up stairs that lies to the east.

Feb. 13. Frances is so much better that she is able to take a walk, along with John and me, as far as the India Ware-

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house in Rundle Street, where we saw some exquisitely beautiful work: veils (?), feather fans, Chinese toys, etc.

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April 2. We have news of the recall of Governor Gawler and Captain Grey being appointed in his stead. The report has reached us from one of the neighbouring colonies.

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May 12. Yesterday's news is now confirmed, for Captain Grey is really come by the Lord Glenelg, though much sooner than we expected him. This ship has brought a newspaper from Southampton with the account of Uncle George's death, which occurrence has vexed (?) us very much. As we are going into mourning directly Mama went with us to Murray and Greig's to buy bombazine, black crepe etc. for our dresses.

[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – May 12, 1841: Bombazine was a material of silk or worsted. Much used for mourning.]

May 24. The Queen Victoria's birthday and a general holiday in Adelaide. A dinner was given to the black natives to celebrate the occasion. Our flagstaff was decorated with nine flags in honour of the Queen.

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June 25. This evening I went to the Queen's Theatre, along with Mama, Frances, Helen, and John to hear a lecture delivered by Dr. Penny on "The Aborigines". His sentiments were undoubtedly good, but he expressed himself so badly that the lecture was rather more ridiculous than instructive. The dress circle was respectably attended.

July 14. Mr. Schroder having displeased the public by informing against a public house, was honoured by having his effigy burnt in Hindley Street. The figure was previously carried about the town and brought down our acre. Mr. Schroder has acted rather meanly. I believe that this was not the first time.

July 16. The people are highly indignant at the idea of rates being levied upon their property, and the consequence is that Mr. Kingston, the Town Surveyor, being also tax gatherer, is now hung in effigy in South Adelaide.

July 23. Frances drank tea with Mrs. Solomon, and Mr. Solomon saw her home. He came into our cottage and chatted upon the affairs of the Colony, which are in a desperate state. The merchants are failing, money is scarce, and a great many labourers are out of employment; and all chiefly arising from the Government bills having been dishonoured in England.

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July 29. The Queen's theatre was opened for the second season today. Mama, Frances, John, and I went there and saw *The Curse of Mammon*, and *The Dancing Barber*. *The Curse of Mammon* was very well acted and Mrs. Arabin, who supported the principal female character, would, I think, have done credit to any London stage. The performers grouped themselves so as to represent three of Hogarth's pictures of "Marriage a la Mode". *The Dancing Barber* was excellent, laughable and well acted. Miss Lazar danced the highland fling. The house was not full. There were very few ladies and a great many gentlemen.

July 31. We have good news from England. The dishonoured Government Bills are likely to be paid by a loan from the British Government, and it is supposed that this will become a Crown Colony. We are now in hopes that trade will flourish once more.

August 2. This evening there was a total eclipse of the moon, which lasted upwards of two hours and was one of the most beautiful sights I ever beheld. It was visible rather earlier than expected owing to an error in our South Australian Almanack. I mean the one published by R. Thomas & Co. it arose from that part of it being copied from the London Nautical Almanack, and the difference of time between England and this country was not properly calculated and the eclipse was marked down to take place two hours later than it really happened.

August 5. We saw snow on top of Mount Lofty. The first number of a new paper, called the Adelaide Independent, was brought out today. It is printed and published by Mr. George Dehane, formerly a workman in our printing office.

August 6. We have now a newspaper for everyday in the week except Sunday and Monday. The Southern Australian is published by Mr. MacDougal on Tuesday. The Chronicle is printed and published in our office on Wednesday, Mr. Dehane's Adelaide independent on Thursday, the Southern Australian again on Friday, and our South Australian Register comes out Saturday. Mr. Dehane brought out a paper some time ago styled the Adelaide Advertizer, which soon died from want of means.

August 16. The Queen's Theatre was opened today under the patronage of the Freemasons of the Lodge of Friendship.....  
The Governor had chosen a box but was not, I believe, present.

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Sept. 15. Mama brought an action three or four months ago against Mr. Cornelius Birdseye for the recovery of the value of a plough that he had borrowed of my father about two or three years since when he neither returned nor paid for it. In consequence Mama sent the case into the Resident Magistrate's Court about the time before mentioned. After a long postponement the question was at length decided this day and against us, with costs on both sides. We had three witnesses in our favour, and Mr. Birdseye none.

Sept. 25. Mama purchased an "emu" of Mr. Alston, and the feathers are so beautiful that she intends to send some of them to England.

Oct. 6. We are packing up a case of curiosities for our friends at home (England), and among the rest there are some beautiful feathers of an "emu" that Mama bought from Mr. Alston. Some of them are fit to place on a bonnet and the others would make a boa. The legs and feet of the emu are packed with them. There are native insects, native bulbs, and seeds, baskets made by the blacks, an opossum skin, and some presents in ivory from China. The case will be forwarded by Mr. Higgins.

Oct. 11. Though we print the Free Press we are not the proprietors nor do I know who they are. Mr. Hailes is the editor. The Independent is not quite dead yet, but I do not suppose that it will last long, because there are too many newspapers already. For instance the Southern Australian comes out on Tuesday, then our Chronicle on Wednesday, the Independent, the Free Press, and the Government Gazette on Thursday, the Southern Australian again on Friday, and our Register on Saturday.

Oct. 16. ....A little girl was born [to Frances] at about seven o'clock this morning.

[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – Oct. 16, 1841: This was Jane Georgiana Kyffin Skipper, afterwards Mrs. Marshall Melrose. Died on Jan. 18, 1880.]

Nov. 28. Mama, Helen, and I went to Trinity Church this afternoon to hear the Scotch Presbyterian service by Mr. Haining.

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Dec. 25. We had a rather curious Christmas dinner. It consisted of fried fish and a huge plum pudding that would have served as an Australian curiosity for some museum. Robert went with us in the evening for a delightful walk towards Periwinkle Point. We spent an English Christmas evening in some respects, for it was so cold that we have a fire in the sitting room.

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[1842]

Jan. 26. Miss Reid, Helen, and I walked on the beach and saw H.M.S. Beagle in the Bay.

Feb. 8. A forgery was detected of some one pound notes in the South Australian Bank, supposed to have committed by persons in this colony. Mr. Edward Stephens, of the Bank, and Mr. Rowlands, the Welshman, called this evening to see Mr. Stevenson, but he was not here. Mr. Stevens showed us the forged notes. They were very badly executed.

Feb. 9. There was a large public meeting held at Mr. Solomon's theatre today to consider the present depressed state of the colony.

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Feb. 10. Saw the bank and ditch round Government House and the fortifications that are built outside Captain Frome's residence. These fortifications are quite ridiculous, for instead of affording any protection to the house they would, in my opinion, in the case of an attack only serve the enemy for something to laugh at. Mrs. Newman and a gentleman called at Mr. Williams' while I was there. Mr. Stow drank tea there, and after tea Mr. Driver, an Indian gentleman, and a friend of his paid the family a visit in the private parlour. Among the propositions passed at the meeting yesterday there was one which proved to be utterly ridiculous. It was "that the three editors of the Register, the Chronicle, and the Southern Australian should give up their editorships and that three more able writers should be appointed in their stead. They are so dissatisfied with the present Governor that I have heard that they wanted to collect a mob to turn him out of Government House. I think the scheme is far too outrageous to be carried into effect.

Feb. 16. The horticultural show was fixed for today, and notwithstanding the rain, Mama, Frances, Helen, John, and I went to see it. The flowers, fruit, etc. were exhibited at the new school house in North Terrace. There were samples of wheat, barley, maize, oats, millet, potatoes, onions, rhubarb, vegetable marrow, parsnips, carrots, turnips, radishes, cabbages, peas, french beans, beetroot, pumpkins, melons, apples, grapes (black and white), almonds, figs, peaches, Cape gooseberries, one pomegranate, flax, sugar cane, butter, cheese, and butter milk cheese. The room was crowded, even too much so far for my comfort. Several ladies were there and I have since heard that Governor and Mrs. Gray were present besides.

Feb. 27. Mama, John, Robert, and I walked to Papa's country section situated three miles from Adelaide.



[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – Feb. 27, 1842: this section is on the main road at what is now called Enfield. The family lived there for some years.]

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Mar. 10. The colony is in a very desperate condition just now. Our merchants are failing, everybody is desponding under the general want of money. I hope that there will be a favourable turn in our affairs soon, or else I cannot tell what will become of us all. Colonel Gawler has so embarrassed our government by his extravagance that the present Governor is obliged to be altogether as economical. We want some good capitalists from England, though doubtless many who are inclined to emigrate will be deterred from coming by the present ill opinion of this place in the home country.

Mar. 25. Good Friday and Lady Day. Divine service at Trinity Church, Hot cross buns.

Mar. 30. John drove Mrs. Solomon, Frances and myself, in Mrs. Solomon's carriage to Mr. Mildred's section today. The house is prettily situated near the river, with garden, etc. and shaded with a pleasant verandah. Some time after our arrival the dinner was placed on the table and the little party who sat down to it consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Mildred, Mrs. Solomon, Mrs. Hay, Mr. Skipper, Mr. Hiram Telemachus Mildred, and myself. Mr. Mildred and Mrs. Hay (his daughter) accompanied us from town to their house in the country in their gig in the morning, and again rode home with us in the evening as far as Mr. Solomon's, in Currie Street, where we all took tea. The reason of our returning to Adelaide so early was that we were afraid of being on the road in the dark.

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May. 13. I think that colonial affairs are as bad as ever and I cannot conceive what will become of us all with out and increase in capital from somewhere.

May. 15. Mr. Charles Wright cauterized my throat. Last week I was in dreadful pain after the operation, but today I did not suffer so much.

May. 25. No Chronicle today, as it was printed and published for the last time on Wednesday last. The Chronicle belongs to my father but is discontinued for the present from the want of (I believe) of sufficient advertisements, which is attributable to the depression of the times and not to any public dislike to the paper.

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[1842]

Sept. 16. Dr. Wright told Mama that the swelling inside [my throat] must be cut off, but that the scissors which were used before will not do for the final operation, as it will be dangerous unless the points are blunted. When Dr. Wright left our house he took Mama's long scissors with him as he intends to have two knobs put on the ends.

Oct. 10. My sister Frances' second daughter was born today.

[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – Oct. 10, 1842: This daughter was called Frances Mary. She became Mrs. B. G. Edwards.]

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Dec. 16. Mr. Thomas Wigley, a young gentleman of sixteen, drove me down to the bay in his father's cart this afternoon, and Mr. Wigley's dray followed with our furniture. I am now at Mr. Wigley's house, where I am to remain with Miss. Hillier until tomorrow. This evening, Miss. Hillier, Tom Wigley, and I went for a walk across the salt creek and gathered some very nice native fruit which we found growing upon some bushes on the sand hills. I have never visited this place since our first landing in this country, when we spent about seven months at the primitive settlement.

Dec. 25. Frances and I dined at Mr. Wigley's in company with Mr. Solomon, Mrs. Walsh, Miss Hillier, Mr. Tom Wigley, and Lizzy. Dinner – roast beef, roast sucking pig, plum pudding and mince pies.

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[1843]

Beginning of April. I had a severe fever about this time. Dr. Wright attended me and pronounced the fever to be intermittent. I ought to have had forty leeches on my head, but was too weak to bear them. The comet lasted about a month and was so exceedingly beautiful that it excited the wonder of every one. Even our bright moon was outshone by it.

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Aug. 12. Helen and I are now in Holdfast Bay, having ridden down by the bullock dray, the late rains have left the roads in such a dreadful state that the bullocks had not only mud but water to wade through.

[1844]

Jan. 19. Robert [brother] was initiated into the mysteries of Free Masonry and admitted into the Adelaide St. John's Lodge, of which Mr. J. F. Bennett is Master. This lodge has recently been formed.

Feb. 6. The foundation stone of the Scotch Kirk [church] was laid in the presence of the Masons belonging to the Lodge of Friendship and those of St. John's. The ceremony was performed with full Masonic honours, observances and arrangements. The members of the order walked in procession, wearing their aprons, jewels, etc. and were accompanied by Mr. Haining, the Presbyterian Scotch Minister, who had been previously, but very recently, initiated. My brother Robert carried the silver pens as secretary to his own lodge. An anthem was sung and a prayer offered up – each appropriate to the ceremonies. There was also a band of music in attendance. After the whole was completed the brethren of the respective lodges returned to their place of meeting and

concluded the evening with a dinner. The site of the proposed Scotch Kirk is opposite Mrs. Lambert's house in Grenfell Street.

Feb. 14. This afternoon the annual horticultural show was held in a large marquee in the park lands. Various fruits and flowers were exhibited, besides some specimens of Australian manufacture, among which might be mentioned castor oil, tobacco in one or two different forms, and hearth rugs of native wool. Mama, Frances, Helen, John, Robert, Georgy, and I went and found all but the heat delightful

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and animating. The scenery of the spot was particularly beautiful. The Governor awarded the prizes and, accompanied by Mrs. Grey, visited the tent for that purpose.

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Mar. 5. Mr. Charles Wright called and found me very ill. Mama sent for Dr. Wright, who ordered cupping on the head immediately. His son Charles cupped me on both temples, having previously shaved off as much of my hair as was necessary to leave room for the glasses.

May 26. Frances' third daughter was born this day. This makes a fourth niece as my brother William has one daughter, born last November, and they say she is a fine girl.

[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – May 26, 1844: This daughter was called Helen Stark, after her uncle, James Stark, a clever artist.]

Aug. 10. The exploring party, headed by Captain Sturt, left Adelaide. Mr. Charles Wright's expected appointment has been given to a friend of Captain Sturt's. I cannot say but that I am heartily glad of it, because the commander takes but a small force with him into a country entirely unknown to the whites, where they may be exposed to the dangers that some of them at least have never experienced.

Oct. 17. This day I came into possession of 56 acres of land situated on or near the port Road. The deed of conveyance from

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Robert to myself is signed and delivered. The land grant is also given up to me and Mr. William Stevens rents part of the land, but he has neither lease nor agreement.

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Nov. 14. I sat to John [Skipper] for my likeness in oils.

[1845]

Jan. (no date). My brother Robert and Mr. William Parry James entered into partnership as architects and surveyors.

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June. 21. I signed an agreement between Mr. William Stevens and myself in which he undertakes to rent sixteen acres of my land for twelve months at the rate of three shillings an acre for the first six months and three and six pence for the remainder of the term.

June (no date). Helen and I went with Mrs. Wright this afternoon to the Legislative Council Chamber to see a number of paintings executed by Mr. George French Angas and exhibited by him for the gratification of the public previous to his taking them to England. Most of the drawings were in water colour and some of them [were] particularly good. They consisted chiefly of land views in South Australia and New Zealand, and portraits of the New Zealand natives. We were all three very much pleased with the exhibition and would have been glad of an opportunity of examining every picture and curiosity that excited our imagination without having any other visitors looking over our shoulders. While walking home from the Council Room we met Dr. Wright, and he, Mrs. Wright, Helen, and I all went down to the river to [see] what progress they had made towards building a bridge. Saw them pumping away at our new place where they intended to put the foundation stone. After we were sufficiently gratified with that Helen and I accompanied Dr. and Mrs. Wright as far as the end of Morphett Street.

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Aug. 21. Kurl-yoo and Ler-loo-lee [Aboriginal names] called yesterday.

Aug. 30. My brother William has sent a note to inform Mama of the birth of a second daughter on this very day.

[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – Aug. 30, 1845: This was Helen Kyffin Thomas. She marries George Birks, the chemist.]

Sept. 1. We have just got the news of Captain Sturt's arrival at Moor-undie with all safe except Mr. Poole, the second in command who, according to the intelligence we have received, died in the bush.

Sept. 2. There is still a slight variation in the newspaper report of Captain Sturt, as his exact position is not yet ascertained; but he is supposed to be surveying part of the northern district. Some of our gentlemen are desirous of going out into the bush to meet Captain Sturt and conduct him to town. We have no direct announcement of the late proceedings of their party and their leader as yet, but the news of their safety is the more gratifying as the most horrible accounts have reached us from the blacks at Moor-undie respecting these adventurers. Mon-i-ya (?), a native we are acquainted with, gave Mr. Skipper a full account of it. The blacks at Moor-undie have been waiting for some time to accompany a party of whites to ascertain the truth of the matter, but I suppose that the Governor had other information, as I believe no such expedition ever set forward. The natives were most likely deceived by the other tribes, as well as ourselves, as I have heard that they have been mourning their relatives who went out with Captain Sturt.

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Sept. 27. Mr. Edwin Brown has taken forty acres of my land and will have the remaining sixteen when my other tenant, William Stevens, gives up his farm. He takes the whole section for ten years, the first twelve months to be rent free, and for the other nine years he will pay a bushel of wheat an acre and let me have it at market price. He also agrees to put up a good fence and to erect a dwelling house, the latter to be valued by two parties at the expiration of the term, and I am to pay for it accordingly.

Oct. 4 The locusts are becoming numerous in North Adelaide, but they are only small at present. We had them last year when the melons were young and they injured a good many plants in consequence. They infested the whole country in 1843, but they were not in such numbers as in the year following.

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[1845]

Oct. 10. Everyone is delighted with some fine specimens of copper that have arrived from a mine at Coor-in-ga, situated about ninety seven miles from Adelaide.

Oct. 14. The Elphinstone, an East India Company's ship came in today with Major Robe, our new Governor, onboard.

Oct. 19. (Sunday). Helen and I met Mrs. Wright on the road from her house to Trinity Church and walked with her to her pew. The church is certainly improved altogether and the interior has a more finished appearance. The Catholics talk of building a cathedral, a monastery and a nunnery in this country. A party under the command of Mr. Piesse set out with provisions for Captain Sturt the other day.

Oct. 22. It is formally announced that Captain Grey will take leave of us on Saturday [via the Elphinstone]. He will hold an undress levee and Mrs. Grey will receive the ladies of the colony. Major Frederick Holt Robe is at present only lieutenant Governor, which title he will retain until Captain Grey leaves this province for New Zealand. This arrangement is owing to some bills being due for which Captain Grey would be liable were he to resign his rank while in this country. This explanation of affairs is made as distinctly as I can understand them.

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Nov. 5. Helen and I called on Mrs. Wright and stayed to tea with her, Dr. Wright, and their son Charles. We saw one bonfire and heard several crackers about the town in order of Protestantism, this being Gunpowder Treason and Plot Day. Such a worthy example induced Mrs. Wright to send for some squibs and two Catherine wheels. Mr. Charles let them off and Dr. and Mrs. Wright, Helen, the servant, myself, and the dog Tinker were the spectators. Helen and I walked home, escorted by Mr. Charles, and on our road were very much delighted by seeing a beautiful rocket thrown upwards to a considerable height..... The locusts are exceedingly numerous near the town. Mr.

Stevenson, in North Adelaide, says that they are injuring his garden to the amount of ten pounds a day. [We] saw Mr. Mayo's garden this afternoon and found several plants covered over with gauze, or something of the kind, to protect them.

Nov. 25. My brother Robert has been to Mount Barker to survey part of a new copper mine.

Dec. 9. The bush dress is frequently worn here by those in the country. The men under the command of Mr. Piesse, who went out to Captain Sturt some time ago, were, I am told, all obliged to wear a red woollen shirt. Our vines are again coming into leaf. I read in the newspaper this afternoon that Dr. Davy has made an experiment in smelting some of the copper from the Burra Burra mine and that he used charcoal instead of coal for his operations. This country seems to be very rich in lead and copper mines, we have the Montecute, the Echunga, the Glen Osmond, the Burra Burra, the Kapunda, and the newly discovered one at Mount Barker. I am

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Glad to say that hot and cold baths have been established in Adelaide for the use of the public. But the charges are too high.

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[1845]

Dec. 24. Mr. James called this evening to tell us that he had made arrangements for our excursion tomorrow. We are going to Hawkins' Crafers Hotel, Stringy Bark Forest.

Dec. 25. Mr. James dined with us upon roast beef and plum pudding, and then drove Mama, Helen and myself up to the Tiers as far as Hawkins'. The mountain scenery was truly splendid, sublime, and magnificent.

Dec. 29. This evening I received a carpet bag with a supply of clothes from home.

[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – Dec. 29, 1845: These bags were sometimes as much as two feet long. They were made of real floor carpet, often bright red and blue. Hideous.]

Dec. 30. This part of the country is exceedingly beautiful. I accompanied Mrs. Hawkins this morning in a walk to a most splendid spot. I have seen hills, valleys, and gullies till I have been bewildered with fine scenery, though so much delighted that when on a rambling excursion, I am obliged to pause at every new turn in the road to admire it. Last Sunday I walked out on a Bridal path cut into the slope of a hill, with a mountain rising boldly on one side, altogether forming a far more romantic view than I can pretend to describe.

Dec. 31. Stringy Bark Forest. I have seen party of overlanders just arrived from the Murray, which place they reached, I believe, from Port Phillip with a herd of cattle, part of which I have seen. One of the overlanders borrowed a comb for his hair, he, as he averred, not having used one until the day previous for three months. As they have not been to Adelaide when I caught a glimpse of them, I must have seen a great deal of their primitive bush roughness, as their long beards, etc. partly proved.

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[1846]

Jan. 1. The races I liked very well, but the dust was so awful, so completely overwhelming, that it was perfectly ludicrous to see its effects on the faces of the people, for the skin was covered, I think I may almost say disguised, by it, as if we had worn masks. The spectators were very numerous. We left the course as soon as the races were over and drove to Mrs. Wright's where we all dined, roast beef and plum pudding, etc. being set out in readiness for the visitors. Helen and I [then] took our leave with the promise of returning in a short time. It was necessary to come home as our dresses required changing. After being duly equipped Helen and I walked back to Dr. Wright's and took tea in company with Mrs. Wright, Captain and Mrs. Holmes, Messrs. Edward, Charles, Robert, Thomas and Septimus Wright, Mr. Arthur Gliddon and Mrs. William Cook. Shortly after this the tea table was cleared away, the young gentlemen brought out their music, and we commenced dancing..... it was nearly two o'clock before my sister and I could bid them all goodbye, I scarcely felt any fatigue. Mr. Tom Wright escorted us home instead of his brother Charles, who had been suffering indisposition all the night.

Jan.4. Helen and I went to Grenfell Street to visit Mrs. Primrose and [later] inspected a new steam mill, then in an unfinished

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state, that Dr. Kent has been erecting in the neighbourhood.

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Jan. 14. Dispatches have arrived from Captain Sturt, who will shortly be at Moor-un-dee, but owing to the absence of the Governor they have not yet been opened. But an interesting letter from the Captain to Mr. J. Morphett has been published in the newspapers. They have not crossed the continent as they had hoped to do, having met with a desert which, with its sandy ridges, stones, and want of water, seemed altogether appalling.

Jan. 19. Captain Sturt came in from the bush. This afternoon a gentleman by the name of MacGillary called upon us at the cottage. He belongs to H.M.S. Fly, and being the naturalist of that ship Papa gave him some specimens of lead and copper ore from the South Australian mines. The Fly anchored in Holdfast Bay a day or two ago.

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[1846]

Jan. 30. Mr. Charles Wright once more applied the scissors to my throat. He did not this time make more than two incisions. I was very much pleased a few days ago by seeing some portraits, beautifully thrown off in Daguerreotype, by a German lately arrived with a great number of his countrymen in the George Washington. These were the second number of specimens of the Daguerreotype likenesses that have been shown to me.

Feb. 13. Mr. Charles Wright made two more incisions in my throat today. The first one was very painful. Robert Black's youngest child, to whom Helen and I stood godmother's, has lately died of the whooping cough. A great number of children appear to have been attacked with this complaint and several cases have ended fatally. They say that this disease was brought into the colony by one of the ships.

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[1846]

Feb. 19. Helen and I went to see the Horticultural Show, accompanied by our brother Robert. The show was held at a beautiful spot on the Park Lands, and the fruits, flowers, vegetables, wheat, barley, wine, ale, Australian leather, bells cast by Pybus from native copper, besides reflecting telescope made by a Mr. Little, and two specimens of carving cleverly executed by a Mr. Stutley (?) were all exhibited in a marquee. The flowers were not very numerous owing to the lateness of the season, and the fruits were not in very great abundance. The wine was made in the colony from grapes grown in this country...

Feb. 20. A fair was held on the Park Lands in the very same spot that was set apart for the Horticultural Show yesterday. This was the first thing of the kind that has been seen in South Australia.... A public dinner is to be given to Captain Sturt this evening, to which Captain Holmes and my father are gone.

Feb. 27. The fire works were exhibited this evening, but we saw only a few rockets from our own door and the top of the stone house.

[Note from Mrs. E.H. Bushell, a great grand-daughter – Feb. 27, 1846: Robert Thomas, Senior, owned also three cottages at the rear of Rhantregwnwyn. The stone house mentioned was either a house of four rooms, about 60 feet from Rhantregwnwyn, or else the two story building was the Register printing office. The Thomas flower garden is now called Register Lane, and the printing office afterwards became the Clarendon Hotel, probably after being rebuilt. Rhantregwnwyn faced east, and the side of the house faced Hindley Street. It had seven rooms. At the rear was a fruit and vegetable garden, through which a dry creek ran north and south. It was about two feet deep and three feet wide. It was spanned by a little foot bridge.]

Mar. 15. Mr. James dined with us and took a walk with Robert and me into the Park Lands, where my brother sketched a beautiful view of a cottage, with the mountains for a background, and the gum trees for a foreground.



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[1846]

Mar. 30. ....The natives are mustering at the neutral ground, near Randall's place, and talk of holding a grand corroboree this evening.

Mar. 31. ....(near the Port) Some few natives have been paying us a visit lately. Cow-eeta (?) was one who seemed to be a civil, quiet man. Another was a woman named Coonartoo. Mr. Wilkinson stayed some time in our house. We made an arrangement to go see the blacks in the evening. At the time appointed Mr. Wilkinson left home with Mrs. Skipper and my sister Helen, preceded by Mr. Skipper, Mrs. Wilkinson, and myself. We all walked down to their wurlies, which are erected at a place some distance from the town. On arriving at this spot we could not help admiring the splendour and wildness of the scene, as we stood surrounded by, I should think, four or five hundred natives and among large trees of which some [were] half hidden by the darkness, while others were partly illuminated by the native fires and, by throwing out their broad shadows, appeared in bold relief. The fires, by which we were guided to their place, were numerous and appeared to be made in circles to some degree of uniformity. Instead of having them crowded together they left good spaces between each. After visiting the blacks belonging to two or three different tribes, we went to another part of the ground, where we found a large number of natives assembled and making preparations for a corroboree, which we waited to see. The result was very gratifying. A great number of blacks ranged themselves with scrupulous regularity in a sitting position so as to face the dancers. These consisted of the Moorundee tribe and their corroboree was intended to represent the stealing of a wife from another tribe. The whole scene was well acted, and what especially delighted me was that they kept such true time with foot and voice. Although I have often heard the corroboree I never discovered anything in the shape of a song so nearly resembling vocal music as that we were favoured with. I should think that there were about 150 of the Moorundee tribe dancing, and the number of spectators was afterwards swelled by several natives from Encounter Bay who not in general being on friendly terms with those from Moorundee, kept their spears in their hands instead of laying them down. Besides these we saw some from Kapunda.

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[1846]

Apr. 2. (Montefiore's stores) ...Mrs. Wilkinson asked me if I should not like to be weighed. I stepped onto the machine in the store and, by Mr. Wilkinson with Mr. Gibbon's assistance, was found to weigh six stone seven pounds.

Apr. 3. We were all vexed to hear that Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson had met with another accident, having been thrown out upon the road with the rest of the passengers at Wilkins' Bridge. But I am glad to say that no one was hurt. Mr. T. Lipson came down on business this evening. He says that my section, instead of being fenced and cultivated or having anything done to it by my new tenant, Edwin Brown, is converted to a cattle run. No man of the tenant is known in that neighbourhood. A Mr. Scholler lays claim to the land. I

heard some time ago that the house was going to rack and ruin, the windows knocked out, and half the roof down the wall.

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[1846]

Apr. 6. News has been brought to Adelaide of a gold mine having been discovered at the Northern Montecute, and the gold, of which a specimen has been seen today by Captain Holmes, runs it is said, in a vein of two inches thick.

Apr. 16. One of the natives have given me the name of Kartarnyah instead of my own proper one of Mary. I have a very old acquaintance among the black women whose name is really Kartarnyah. Their own appellations are very musical, as indeed their language in general.

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[1846]

May 3. He [Mr. Charles Wright] says that the black natives have told him that they anticipate a flood this rainy season and, if such a thing were to happen, that the waters are likely to reach as high as Trinity Church. We have had a flood at the Reed Beds already, but the ones the blacks prognosticate would be much worse than any we have seen yet.

May 25. The queen's birthday was kept today. My two sisters and I accompanied Mrs. Holmes and her small daughter to North Terrace to see the blacks dine, but were somewhat disappointed by finding that, instead of sitting down at a long table to a dinner provided and cooked for them, as in the times of Governor Gawler, they had some food distributed to them separately. The Governor and a few military officers were assembled without the Government ground enclosure to meet the natives, of whom, as we were rather late arrivals, we did not see many. I was pleased to observe that some of the blacks were dressed in new blankets, a gift of the whites, but still I think that they ought to have been treated with greater liberality and if I had my will they should have been regaled with roast beef and plum pudding.

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[1846]

May 30. I was delighted, while on the sofa this morning, by hearing a wild parrot on an acacia tree in the garden.

June 1. This day I first began wearing a woven lamb's wool shirt instead of a flannel waistcoat, which I put on only at night.

June 11. Had a chat about the news of the day and, among other things, of a report that the King of France is dead and that England in at war with America.

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[1846]

July 19. Helen and I went to Trinity Church this morning. I was very much delighted by seeing about 30 or 40 black girl natives seated in a row by the side of the pew and on the steps of the altar. The last time I was at church I saw a number of black boys sitting down the aisle. Some of the girls were reading (?) during the service.

July 20. A public meeting was held at the Supreme Court House on the occasion of a Government grant having been proposed in the Legislative Council for the general support and promotion of religion, the money to be divided among all denominations of Christians. The meeting was called by the Church people, who hoped by the means of a petition, I believe, to have the measure passed through the Council into an Act, but the Church party were strongly opposed by the dissenters, who are so much in favour of the voluntary principle that they are determined to adopt no other. I am sorry to add that the Church party are defeated, as the dissenters carried the [day] by force of numbers. The Methodists moved that the memorial be presented to the Governor praying him [to] negative the proposed grant and, on a show of hands, there was a majority in their favour.

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[1846]

July 28. There is no likelihood of a war between England and America [according to] news brought by the Medway. The Government have seemed to think it necessary that a militia should be organized in the colony. I believe it was the above report that induced the Legislative Council to take the above measure into consideration. A militia was raised here some years ago, but in proof of its not having succeeded I need only mention that I have heard that one day on parade they mustered seventeen officers and three men.