

THOMAS HODGES MATE

A MAN OF MANY PARTS & ONE OF ALBURY'S FIRST BUSINESSMEN

Short talk by June Shanahan (presented at A&DHS General Meeting, August 2012 and reprinted from A&DHS Bulletin No 527)

Thomas Hodges Mate was born in Kent England on the 5 April 1810. In 1833, he left England for Sydney where he stayed for about 18 months. Then, acting on the advice of his friends, he went up country to gain experience working on a station owned by Mr Fuller. Two years later he made his first speculation in sheep, purchasing a small flock from Hannibal Macarthur, nephew of John Macarthur. He travelled south with his flock and settled on the Tarcutta creek about eighty miles from Albury. There were between 300 and 400 Aborigines camping around him at Tarcutta Creek and he showed commendable aptitude in befriending them.

There were no townships where Wagga Wagga and Gundagai now stand and Yass was just assuming the appearance of a village. His association with Albury and pastoral pursuits in the Riverina dated from the year 1835.

In the 1840s Thomas Mate became associated with a Mr. Bardwell in the management of Tarcutta Station. On 8 February 1836, Mate married Maria Bardwell, sister of his associate. Mate purchased Brae Springs Station and this was his home for many years. He retained his interest in Tarcutta and also acquired other properties including Kulki, formerly known as Yanko block, Tumbarumba Station, Woonoona which was managed by his son William and Wongong, managed by William Jnr.

Despite his pastoral and business responsibilities, Thomas Hodges Mate entered public life and had a record of honourable service. He was elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly in 1861 as the member for Hume and held the seat for eight years. He succeeded in passing an act to deal with the careless use of fire a measure which proved to be beneficial to pastoralists. He held a seat on the Albury municipal council between 1886 and 1889 and was mayor in 1888. His determination and strong advocacy resulted in the establishment of the municipal sale yards. Mr. Mate was a generous supporter of St. Matthews Church of England in Kiewa Street.

Thomas Mate established a general store with Mr W Evans as manager, on the corner of Hume and Townsend Streets, Albury, in 1850. The discovery of gold at Beechworth and Yackandandah shortly afterwards brought an increase in the population of Albury and huge opportunities for business. In 1899 Mate's expanded to its iconic department store on corner of Dean & Kiewa Streets. Mate's Store became the largest store of its kind in the Riverina.

Thomas Mate's wife Maria died in 1878 and in 1883 he married Florence Brown who had been born in Albury in 1865. They had one daughter Florence Ada Mate, born in 1885. She married Augustus Lewis Lemerle and died in 1963 in Balmain, Sydney.

Thomas Hodges Mate died aged 84 on 21 July 1894 at Manly, Sydney and was buried in the Anglican Cemetery Waverley. He left a widow, three sons and four daughters. The name of Mate's was a household name in Albury and the wider district for more than a century.

