



ANZAAB Aspects of Book Collecting **Melbourne, New South Wales: the literature on Melbourne and the Port Phillip District published before Separation in 1850**

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Melbourne in 1850, on the eve of the gold discoveries of the following years, was already a thriving port with a settler population of more than 20,000. There is a considerable contemporary literature on the subject; but, for the collector, it seems much smaller in total because all of the local publications are rare. Fortunately we have an excellent guide in C.P. Billot's *Melbourne, an annotated bibliography to 1850*, published in 1970. Billot includes all contemporary books, pamphlets, periodicals and newspapers published in Melbourne; as well as other publications of the time, except newspapers, that deal 'at any reasonable length' with Melbourne and environs; all books by early residents of Melbourne, wherever published; Parliamentary Papers and other official printings; the numerous printed documents of the Port Phillip Association, formed in Van Diemen's Land in 1835; and colonial maps of the region. This brief notice is confined to the books and pamphlets of the period that are wholly or largely concerned with Melbourne and the Port Phillip District.

The earliest of the local publications is the newspaperman George Arden's *Latest information with regard to Australia Felix*, 1840, which is the first book printed in Melbourne and a celebrated rarity. A Sydney directory of 1839 was the first to include Port Phillip residents, but the first local equivalent was Kerr's *Melbourne Almanac and Port Phillip Directory*, which reached a second edition in the following year. These are substantial books, good copies of which can still occasionally be had for \$3,000-5,000. An abbreviated third edition, of 1843, is however, very rare, as are all the subsequent early directories—of 1845, 1847 (two) and 1849. Three pamphlets on the Aborigines of Port Phillip were issued in 1845 and 1846, by James Dredge, William Hull and William Westgarth; and in 1845 the only political treatise of any substance published in Melbourne during the period, Gideon Lang's *Land and labour in Australia*. Of the very few separately published literary works, the most notable is Thomas McCombie's *Australian sketches*, lightly fictionalized descriptive sketches, which appeared in 1847. Published in the same year, and a great collecting prize, is John Skinner Prout's *Views of Melbourne and Geelong*, 6 tinted views lithographed by the artist in Hobart. A copy of this rarity recently sold at auction for \$39,000.

In contrast, the contemporary accounts of the Port Phillip District published in Britain and Ireland are all still fairly readily obtainable, except the first, the London edition of Arden's *Latest information*, which appeared in 1841 (as *Recent information*): it is scarcely less rare than the original. The 6 other works, copies of which can be found for between \$300 and \$1500, are Robert Dundas Murray's *A summer at Port Phillip*, Edinburgh, 1843 (and an undated reissue); Richard Howitt's *Impressions of Australia Felix*, London, 1845 (also issued in the same year as *Australia, historical, descriptive and statistic*); Charles Griffith's *The present state of the Port Phillip District*, Dublin, 1845; George Henry Haydon's *Five years' experience in Australia Felix*, London, 1846, with plates of Aborigines after the author's sketches; John Dunmore Lang's *Phillipsland*, Edinburgh and London, 1847; William Westgarth's *Australia Felix*, Edinburgh, 1848; and Dr James Clutterbuck's *Port Phillip in 1849*, London, 1850.

Of course many of the sources for the early history of Melbourne were first published much later: an extensive bibliography is appended to A.G.L. Shaw's *A history of the Port Phillip District*, Melbourne, 1996.