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## **From Inns to Hotels: The Evolution of Public Houses in Colonial Victoria**

### **Abstract**

**Purpose** - This paper examines travelers' experiences with public houses in Colonial Victoria, to determine how the hospitality industry in the colony was transformed from primitive hospitality provision to sophisticated, well managed hotels in a relatively short time.

**Design/methodology/approach** - the article reviews public records, newspapers of the period, eye witness accounts and key texts to chart the development of the hospitality industry in Colonial Victoria and to demonstrate how primitive inns became modern hotels within the space of three decades.

**Findings** - This paper highlights how the discovery of gold in 1851, prompted an unprecedented influx of travelers whose expectations of hospitality provision led to the transformation of existing hostelrys from crude and primitive inns to modern, sophisticated hotels.

**Research limitations/implications** – The research is confined to Colonial Victoria and therefore, not necessarily a reflection of the colonies in general or general trends in hospitality provision at that time.

**Practical implications** – Tracing the roots of hospitality provision and the traditions of hospitality management can provide a greater understanding of modern hospitality practice. As O’Gorman argues “... with historical literature contributing to informing industry practices today and tomorrow: awareness of the past always helps to guide the future” (p. 10).

**Originality/value** – This paper adds to the body of knowledge in relation to the roots and evolution of commercial hospitality.

**Keywords** - History, gold rush, public houses, inns, commercial hospitality, hospitality practice, travelers, Colonial Victoria.

**Paper Type** – Research paper

### **Introduction**

The value to scholars and practitioners of understanding the nature of tourism has been highlighted by Ritchie *et al.* (2011) who advise that much of the research into the evolution of the industry is based on post-World War II provision of tourist experiences. While this is consistent with the evolution of commercial hospitality, there has been a move to understand not only the evolution of hospitality as a commercial activity but also its social and domestic underpinnings (Lashley and Morrison, 2000; O’Mahony, 2009). This article explores the evolution of tourism and hospitality in Colonial Victoria highlighting how private homes gave way to public houses, which were in turn superseded by modern, commercial hotels within a relatively short period.

The article describes how Victoria, from its foundation in the mid-1830s until the late 1860s, meets John Towner’s (1996) classification of a “tourism era of discovery” which includes nascent hospitality. Towner (1996, p. 140) has noted that “Discovery eras are often passed over rapidly in studies of tourism where there is a preference for moving on to periods where visitor numbers can be quantified more clearly”. As is the case with Linderman’s (2013) discussion of the evolution of the “chattam”, a South Indian form of pilgrimage tourism lodgings, and MacLaren *et al.’s* (2013) exploration

of the development of commercial hospitality in the American West, this article is concerned with the processes of “opening-up” new locations and the early growth of hospitality rather than the developments which took place once a tourist flow was well established. Its focus is the “discovery state” of the development of tourism and hospitality and, as such, is consistent with Young’s (1983) “pretourism” era with its stages of “exploration” and “involvement” which he has added to Butler’s (1980) classical Tourism Area Life Cycle concept of tourism development. For the purposes of this study, this “era of discovery” is equated with “nascent hospitality”, here defined as tourism and hospitality as it is coming into being or beginning to exist or develop. Thus tourism and hospitality in this emergent phase may be characterised as embryonic, inchoate, rudimentary, and immature. This, along with other investigations that profile the hospitality industry in its embryonic stages, is valuable to gain an understanding of the processes and drivers of evolution so that entrepreneurs can gain a better understanding of how small businesses can grow into larger commercial entities and how opportunities can be exploited in areas of where tourism has yet to flourish.

### **Research context**

In Colonial Victoria, the mid-nineteenth century modernisation of public houses was relatively swift in that the primitive inns that dominated the industry until between 1836 and 1850 were transformed into modern hotels within three decades. The trigger for such rapid change was the discovery of gold in 1851, and with it, came an unprecedented influx of travelers bearing higher expectations of licensed houses (O’Mahony 2009). Patrons with more sophisticated demands combined with the wealth generated by the gold rushes, provided both the need and the means to carry out major rebuilding programs and this laid the foundations for the style of hotel and service that are recognisable in Australia today. Although the modernisation process was emerging across Colonial Australia and in the United Kingdom by the late 1840s, the changes that occurred were most evident in the colony of Port Phillip (now the state of Victoria) where the richest ore deposits were found. This paper uses public records, newspapers of the period and firsthand accounts of travels in the colonies from 1837-1867 to examine travelers’ experiences with public houses. The article reflects on the transformation of early hospitality premises from crude and primitive inns to modern, sophisticated hotels.

### **Background to the study**

Considering that British settlement in Australia began in New South Wales in 1788, the Port Phillip District and its capital city Melbourne was relatively late in achieving official colonial status. Indeed, the district had been more or less ignored by colonial officials until two rival pastoralists sailed up the Yarra River and established the nucleus around which would form the first permanent European settlement. The first party led by John Batman arrived in May, 1835. Two months later a second party led by John Pascoe Fawkner, a publican from Van Diemens Land (now Tasmania), arrived and settled on the opposite river bank (Dingle, 1984, p. 21).

New South Wales Governor, Sir Richard Bourke, irritated by the settlers' audacity at establishing an illegal squat on Crown land, ordered them to depart. Lured, however, by the rich pasture-land, the settlers refused. After receiving intelligence on the upstart settlement, the Governor learned that it consisted of 177 persons, 25,000 sheep and property valued at £80,000. Since this represented an economic opportunity in terms of land sales, taxation and the lucrative export of wool that was a major contribution to foreign earnings in New South Wales, the Governor agreed to sanction the new colony. Although the land was sought after for raising livestock, public houses were also to play a major role in the colony's economy. This was already evident when Governor Bourke dispatched Captain William Lonsdale as Chief Police-Magistrate to impose some sense of order on the colony's affairs. High on Lonsdale's priorities was the need to control the sale of liquor known in colonial Victoria as the "grog trade" (Freeland, 1966).

Writing to Governor Bourke on 1 November 1836 he reported:

... on my arrival here I found some persons had established Public Houses, and as it would be almost impossible to restrain them from selling I thought it better to come to an arrangement (Lonsdale 1836, p. 1).

Captain Lonsdale's arrangement involved granting licenses to sell liquor to these establishments at a cost of £25 per annum, which was the license fee in force in New South Wales at that time. The *Sydney Gazette*, which was the main colonial newspaper of the period, shows that three licences were issued at that time (*Sydney Gazette* 17 December 1836). Captain Lonsdale further justified his actions by advising Governor Bourke that "some of the houses will afford accommodation to respectable persons, which is becoming necessary for Settlers coming from their Stations, or casual visitors" (Lonsdale 1836, p. 1). In reality, however, two of the three public houses in question were primitive mud huts cobbled together with wattle and daub (sticks and clay) and were frequented by farm labourers who cared little about their drinking conditions (Canon 1991). In fact until the first land sales of 1837 provided settlers with security of tenure, the majority of residents lived in tents or slab huts and the entire fledgling township of Melbourne, then known as Bearbrass, boasted three wooden buildings, eight turf and two slab huts (Freeland 1966; O'Mahony 2006).

Despite the poor quality of the district's drinking establishments, the importance of the emerging hospitality industry to the districts economy was soon evident. Official accounts submitted for the period 1 July to 30 September 1837 show that income

received from hospitality related activities, including breeches of the licensing laws, had provided the State with £21.5s of a total income of £26.14s (Freeland 1966). Further industry growth followed, in line with Walton's contention that "commercial hospitality has its roots in supplying to travelers, through the market, the basic human needs of food, drink, shelter and rest" (Walton, 2000, p.57). Travelers in Victoria's early years were pastoralists and their basic needs en-route to market created strong demand for hospitality services. This led to rapid growth and "by mid-1839 ... twenty annual licences were being issued to publicans, mostly located in Melbourne" (Cannon, 1991, p. 422). Since raising cattle and sheep was the most significant economic activity of the district, however, the necessity to travel to market from the main agricultural regions created the need for hostelrys. Fleet (1979, p.1) confirms that "... soon after the first land sale ... in 1837, inns and licensed grog huts were opened in the country at various places; about Geelong; on the track to Sydney, and in the Western District" . As a result, by 1845 there were over fifty licensed inns and hotels outside Melbourne (O'Mahony, 2007).

With the discovery of gold in the 1850s the demand for hotels, taverns, inns and refreshment rooms to service traffic to and from the goldfields provided additional impetus for the expansion of the hospitality industry. A major gold strike in 1851 to Melbourne's west then created a massive upsurge in the number of travelers seeking food, drink and accommodation along the Gold Route (Serle, 1963). Clearly these conditions created a market for hospitality services; however, it is likely that other socio-cultural or environmental factors also had an impact on industry expansion. The purpose of this article is to highlight these factors whilst describing the conditions in the colony at that time. In this way the manner in which the colony moved from primitive inns to modern hotels can be better understood.

As O'Gorman (2010, p. 1) states "investigating the genesis and the evolution of the phenomenon of hospitality has suffered from relative neglect". This is certainly the case in Australia where there is a dearth of empirical works on Australian historiography relative to tourism and, in particular, the hospitality sector. As Davidson and Spearritt (2000, p. xv) note "detailed studies have been made of some of our most important tourism sites, including Tasmania the Blue Mountains and the Gold Coast. [However] other-[areas] ... including all the capital cities-await further research ... ". Their book identifies the early years of Australian tourism; however, they begin their review of Australian tourism history by describing how tourism attractions and destinations were accessed via the motor car. As a result, their contribution is based on the 130 year period circa 1870 to 2000. Richardson's *History of Australian Travel and Tourism* is also a history of tourism rather than a reflection upon the emergence of the hospitality industry. That publication begins in the period of rail travel, which occurred in Melbourne in the late 1850s. Consequently there is a gap in our understanding of the foundations and early evolution of the hospitality industry in Colonial Victoria.

Since the key aim of this study is to discover the conditions under which the hospitality industry began and to describe the evolution of the industry from its humble beginnings in 1835, this article relies on public records, newspapers of the period and published eye witness accounts to chart the development of the hospitality industry in Colonial Victoria and to demonstrate how primitive inns became modern hotels within the space of three decades. Although the discovery of gold and the

opening up of key travel routes within the colony certainly had an impact on the evolution of the hospitality sector, the research also seeks to understand if other socio-cultural or environmental factors assisted industry expansion. As a result, further historical records are also examined to provide context and meaning to the research.

### **First Hotels**

As noted earlier, Captain Lonsdale thought it prudent to grant licenses to sell liquor to existing hotels, in spite of their primitive state. On 17 December 1836, the *Sydney Gazette* reported that licenses had been granted to three hotels, one weatherboard building and two turf huts. Even with only a rudimentary knowledge of the licensing laws in operation at the time, Lonsdale must have realised that these crude buildings were non-conforming. Strict building codes prohibited the use of turf or sod and dictated that all commercial construction was of weatherboard or brick (Freeland, 1966, p. 47).

As noted earlier, two of the three early hotels were turf constructions and were little more than “grog shanties” - an Australian term for establishments that serviced farm labourers’ voracious appetite for alcoholic drink. However, many contemporary accounts of the more substantial weatherboard construction erected by John Fawkner, allow for a relatively detailed reconstruction of its interior, exterior and the service that was provided. David Fisher, a squatter who visited in December, 1835 describes his experiences as follows:

We found a house of entertainment where we could not get entertained. This building was of turf or sods, with a portion of wood and comprised of 6 apartments of a very primitive order occupied by ‘Johnny Fawkner’ as a public house. Here we could get a bad glass of rum and plenty of water by paying a good price for the same, but we could get nothing to eat, nor a place to sleep in (Bride, 1968, p. 39).

Exterior construction was of palings, with a half shingle roof. Of the interior, floors were uncovered hardwood floors and walls were of whitewashed canvas. The attic was partitioned to provide small sleeping rooms. The six ground floor rooms included a tap-room located at the rear which served as the main drinking space, a large front room or parlour reserved for more respectable customers and a dining room which housed the communal dining table known as the table d’hote. Fawkner’s private quarters could also be turned over to accommodation space when required. Fawkner, an industrious entrepreneur, founded the colony’s first two newspapers, which operated from the hotel and his premises also boasted a large reading library for the benefit of the public (Garryowen, 1964; McGuire, 1952; O’Callaghan, 1922).

Following the first land sales in June, 1837, five hotels were constructed of brick and were substantially larger than their predecessors. The Angel Tavern had three parlours, four bed-rooms, three upstairs rooms, a tap-room, and servants’ quarters and boasted Melbourne’s only billiard table (O’Callaghan, 1922). A much more ambitious venture was the Lamb Inn also built in 1837. This was a weatherboard edifice of no less than 39 rooms including a dining room, coffee room, cellars and stabling for sixteen horses (Cole, 1950). The Lamb Inn soon became the town’s most prestigious hotel and acquired “popularity which seriously damaged Fawkner’s business”

(Garryowen, 1964, p.31). Before the decade closed, the Lamb's popularity also waned as a third generation of more substantial houses emerged.

Byrne who traveled through the colony between 1835 and 1847, observed the improvements occurring throughout the 1840s and noted that the wooden edifices erected in the first days of settlement when bricks and labour were scarce gave way to permanent stone and brick buildings (Byrne, 1848 Vol. 1, p. 332). Byrne was generally impressed with the quality of hotels when he visited in 1848:

The hotels and inns also are of considerable extent, one of these the Royal Hotel in Collins Street, is capable of accommodating 50 or 60 individuals in the most comfortable if not luxurious way (Byrne, 1848 Vol. 1, p. 332).

Throughout the first two decades, the general trend was for hotels to upgrade by adding more rooms and more substance. However, in many respects, little else changed. Contemporary accounts, combined with photographic evidence of early hotels show that the exterior façade resembled any domestic residence. For the public, the only clues that a building was a public house were in the form of the colourful shingle displayed prominently over the main entrance and the legally-mandated lamp which was to be kept burning at night.

While buildings may have been constructed from more solid materials, the weaknesses of the industry's foundations were exposed as it struggled to meet the demands of a now, steady flow of immigrant arrivals. Aspiring squatters who crossed Bass Strait from Van Dieman's Land were known as "overstraiters". Those who attempted the long, arduous overland route from New South Wales were commonly called "overlanders". In each case their ambitions were to rent, buy or squat on government land and raise sheep or cattle for market. Visitors also arrived from the United Kingdom. William Westgarth, a merchant and financier, noted that "younger sons of good families flocked in unusual proportion" (Westgarth, 1888, p.16). By 1840, the colony's population approached some 10,000 people.

### **Promiscuous Sleeping**

Of all the indignities visitors suffered, the problem of communal sleeping was arguably the most keenly felt. The infant hotel industry was ill-prepared to cope with rising demand. Acute accommodation shortages were felt in both town and country and persisted until the late 1850s. The best that town hotels could offer was rough, coarse accommodation. The rural landscape was sparsely dotted with hotels, collectively known as bush inns or wayside inns, which were far less opulent than those in Melbourne. However, the shortage of accommodation left travelers with few options for lodging. In the pre-gold rush period, the visitor faced three options - commercial inns or boarding houses, private hospitality, or living rough. Until the accommodation shortage eased, almost all contemporary accounts provide colourful details of both their search for lodging and their pitiful experiences.

Kerr, a station owner and contemporary writer who observed Melbourne in 1839, commented:

The accommodation and housing was far below the demand and much privation had to be endured ... Many emigrants ... spent several of their first nights on the open wharf coiled up wearily on their boxes, and might consider themselves lucky if they had any kind of tent to spread over their heads ... New arrivals learned first lessons in `roughing [it] (Kerr, 1872, p. 98).

The fortunate who managed to secure accommodation were expected to share with strangers – a practice which became known as “promiscuous sleeping”. In many cases sharing a room meant sharing the same berth, or worse, sharing a “shakedown”, a mattress placed on the floor and shared by any number of people. Faced with the prospect of sharing a room, William Kelly “prayed that my sleeping partner might prove to be a decent man, not too far gone in liquor” (Kelly, 1977, Vol. 2, p. 178). The indignity of shared accommodation was exacerbated by the need to share with a person from a lower social class.

When Edmund Curr, a squatter, stayed overnight at the Bush Inn, near Gisborne, he might well have prayed for a decent companion. Instead, however, he shared his quarters with another squatter and “one of the working class.” (Curr, 1883, p. 27). Ellen Clacy shared a bed with a housekeeper in Melbourne to find that she could not sleep on account of the “unmentionable noises” emanating from her sleeping companion (Clacy, 1963, p.18).

However, many travelers considered themselves fortunate if they could sleep on any available indoor surface, whether a chaise or a billiard table. Kelly, on his first visit to Melbourne in 1853 unsuccessfully tried to find accommodation at three hotels, and devised a strategy for remaining inside on his fourth attempt.

[Despite] all the risks, I resolved to go into some public-house, get some drink and manage to eke out the time on chairs or between benches until the morning (Kelly, 1977, Vol. 1, p. 61).

For other travelers, the outdoors was preferable to sub-standard lodging. Henry Brown and his companion preferred to sleep on a cold, mud floor in the woodshed after being attacked by fleas in the shared accommodation of a Melbourne hotel. His account provides insights into the inventive ways that publicans utilised space.

Each room was a sitting room filled with men, who were drinking and none of them contained a single bed ... about 11 o'clock, mine host [was to be found] clearing out strangers and moving chairs. He was accompanied by his better half, a brawny Irish woman, dragging along dingy bundles ...which upon closer examination resolved themselves into flock mattresses and dirty blankets. They were arranged side by side ... [we] were then informed [to] look smart as the host would remove candles in five minutes. [The following morning while ablutions took place] rooms which had been used for sleeping, were being made ready for breakfast (Brown, 1853, pp. 35-56).

James Demarr, writing of Port Phillip during 1839-41, was critical of both wayside inns for their coarse, primitive conditions and town lodgings for their flea-ridden bedding. His description of a wayside inn provides details of conditions outside the town.

The house was built of the usual split timber, and roofed with great sheets of bark, and divided into five or six rooms, which description will serve for most bush houses ... The beds were on stretchers, which were almost universally used in these places. Sometimes five or six in one small room ... a straw mattress and blankets, no sheets; no such luxury as wash basins. Travelers', on rising in the morning would wash in a bucket, or take a towel and go down to the river. For this accommodation, [we paid] 2s 6d or more (Demarr, 1893, pp. 67-68).

Although the majority of first-hand accounts are negative, there are also some positive accounts of lodging during the period up to 1858. Kelly, who stayed at a hotel in Buninyong in 1853, for example, "enjoyed a jolly night of it in a small room to ourselves, within hearing of digger melodies in the great public room" (Kelly, 1977, Vol 1, p. 169). This was somewhat unusual, however, as in most remote districts commercial accommodation did not yet exist and travelers generally received hospitality at private residences or pastoralists' stations (Clark, 2006). Katherine Kirkland, who lived in Victoria's Western district during the early 1840s explained that "in the bush no-one is allowed to go from a hut without eating or remaining all night, although an entire stranger" (Kirkland, 1845, p. 24) Once settled on her own station, Kirkland found herself in the situation of having to extend hospitality to eight travelers.

I felt much anxiety about giving them beds, but that was impossible as we only had one spare mattress. They must have guessed my thoughts for they told me never to think of giving them anything to sleep on; that no-one in the country ever thought of beds for visitors, and that they would manage for themselves. However, I collected all the blankets, pea-jackets and cloaks I could find and they all slept on the floor (Kirkland, 1845, p. 10).

James Bonwick was another traveler who commented on the universality of bush hospitality.

The greatest thing that can be said of the country is, that the better classes are exceedingly kind and hospitable ... I am sure that we had always have occasion to remember the kindness of the inhabitants of the bush. Every house, if we had desired it, would have opened itself to us on a moment, and the bush kindness I should perhaps venture, I would not be here writing this (Bonwick, 1852, p. 60).

Contemporary commentators offered mixed views about private hospitality. Some writers considered that it was a rule of bush life that hospitality should be extended to strangers. Kerr, while acknowledging the "indispensable service provided by private hospitality", pointed out that the "universal custom of receiving and feeding travelers

naturally led to the grossest abuse”. His account notes that it was impossible to separate the loafers from respectable travelers (Kerr, 1872, pp. 163-164). Travelers made regular demands on Kerr’s hospitality.

On my station on the Loddon [River] it was not unusual circumstance for 20 or even 20 heterogeneous guests to arrive on one night ...while the monthly average rarely fell below 130 (Kerr, 1872, p. 164).

As a result of the financial burden travelers imposed on station finances, several stations commodified the provision of private hospitality modifying their private premises to offer commercial hospitality services. Kerr relates an anecdote of a squatter-friend, known simply as Mr B.

To diminish traffic calling at his station, and the extensive calls on his hospitality, [he] built a little inn near his homestead and placed it in charge of one of his servants. ... the little inn, whose accommodations were limited and primitive, had been built after he found the expense of lodging and entertaining numerous travelers beyond his means (Kerr, 1872, p. 130).

During his wanderings of the colony, James Armour also found a station complete with tap-room, proudly sporting the name, “The Albert”, to minister to the refreshment needs of both shearers and visitors (Armour, 1854, p. 23).

The accounts by Armour and Kerr suggest that hotel-keeping did not require special skills or experience. Many hotel-keepers, like Mr B, simply fell into the trade when they found travelers knocking at their doors. Indeed, the skills required to run a public-house were similar to those of operating a station or of domestic service-cooking, cleaning, laundry, bread-making, cheese-manufacture and brewing.

### **Post Separation Victoria and the Emergence of the Modern Hotel**

In 1851, the colony of Port Phillip celebrated its long-awaited separation from NSW. Within a month, the first deposits of gold ore were discovered at Clunes and subsequently rich deposits at Ballarat and Bendigo in central Victoria (Broome, 1984, pp.67-8). For the hotel industry, both separation and the influx of visitors of the gold-rush period had major implications (O’Mahony, 2007; Clark and Cahir, 2008).

Initially, the emerging hotel industry struggled to meet demand, however, within five years, the accommodation problem had eased. As the decade progressed, contemporary accounts, tended to become more optimistic and less likely to provide negative accounts of hotel stays.

Kelly, who visited the colony in 1853 and again in 1858 observed many changes. His account signals that the demise of shared sleeping had penetrated into country hotels, but also that bedrooms were being furnished with modern bedding. At the Castlemaine Hotel in 1858, after being informed that he did not need to share quarters, he was acutely aware of the break with the past,

I was disappointed to sleep alone [as I was] so accustomed to promiscuous sleeping...for six previous years. I found myself in a spacious room...capitally furnished, the beds being provided with spring mattresses- the first I had seen in the colony (Kelly, 1977, Vol. 2, p. 178)

Travelers who left diaries were people of education and wealth. To mount a voyage to the colonies was an expensive adventure. As the number of hotels grew from dozens in the 1830s to more than 200 in the 1850s, the visitor was faced with more choices and wherever possible, chose to stay at the best hotels. Many accounts suggest an increasing awareness of different classes of hotel from the early 1850s. Ellen Clacy and her party astutely recognized that there were at least two classes of respectable hotel when they began the tedious search for accommodation on arrival in 1852.

Scouts were accordingly dispatched to the best hotels and returned with long faces –full. The second-rate and in fact every respectable inn and boarding or lodging house were tried with no better success. (Clacy, 1963, p. 18)

Many contemporary writers made simplistic distinctions between “reputable and disreputable” hotels. William Kelly cautioned prospective visitors that “respectable people could not venture into second class houses in consequence of the scene which were enacted there” (Kelly, 1977a, p. 58). In reality, this two-tiered classification, while useful to the traveling public, oversimplified a natural evolutionary process that was beginning to take shape in post-separation Victoria.

### **Taverns and Inns**

Following separation, the state no longer inherited its licensing laws from NSW and had to enact its own licensing laws. In 1852, the Licensing Act required all publicans to provide a minimum of six bedrooms (State of Victoria, 1852). In this respect, hotels in the Victorian experience departed from that of the United Kingdom which identified two classes of hotel; inns that provided accommodation and taverns that served a bar-trade.

Many hotel-keepers, believing that the provision of accommodation was not economically, preferred to concentrate on the bar-trade. While some publicans made a half-hearted attempt to comply with new laws, they understood that in light of accommodation shortages, the Government would not be conducive to any measure which reduced the number of available beds. To overcome this, many hotel-keepers provided only the statutory minimum number of bedrooms and focused their energies on the bar-trade, a practice that did not pass unnoticed in many first-hand accounts.

Heywood commented on some publicans’ preference for the bar-trade.

Hotels depend principally on bar-custom, and very frequently give inferior accommodation to lodgers. The front of the house is generally given up to the bar, travelers being quite a secondary consideration, as board and lodging is not so remunerative as retailing spirits, &c (Heywood, 1863, p. 56)

It is worth noting that Heywood's account places the bar at the front of the house- in direct contrast to its precursor, the primitive tap-room which was invariably located at the rear of the house.

Not all hotel-keepers gave the bar their primary attention. Twopeny, a visiting novelist, describes Melbourne in the 1860s, noting that many "hotels derive their chief income from bar traffic" but named several notable exceptions, specifically "Scott's, Menzies and the Oriental" (Twopeny, 1883, p. 27). These named hotels were among the first examples of an entirely new type of public house which became known as "grand hotels".

By the early 1860s, there were at least three distinct types of hotel in operation; grand hotels, drinking taverns [which did not provide accommodation or provided it at a very poor standard] and coaching inns. These distinct classes of hotel emerged spontaneously as the industry's response to changing customer needs. Yet, licensing laws were slow to reflect these natural transformations. It took a Royal Commission of Enquiry (1867) before laws were finally amended to separate drinking taverns from accommodation hotels and thus pubs and hotels went their separate ways as it were.

### **Grand Hotels**

From the 1860s, contemporary diarists record their stays in only the best houses in Melbourne, that is, the grand hotels. Typically these were four or five storey buildings strategically positioned on premium land in Collins, Bourke or La Trobe streets. With at least 100 bedrooms and large dining-rooms, these hotels could accommodate guests in comfort. Archibald Menzies, a native of Scotland, who put his staff into uniforms including a tartan sash, is generally credited with establishing the first of these grand hotels. Menzies typified the modern hotel manager, professional in his dealings with both staff and customers and his hotel became one of the most highly esteemed accommodation facilities in Melbourne (Freeland, 1966, pp.128-9). Heywood describes his stay at Menzies in 1861, shortly after it first opened its doors.

At Melbourne some of us stopped at Menzies' Hotel, LaTrobe Street, a very comfortable place, and the charges not so exorbitant [sic] as we expected. Board and lodging for a week cost about £3.12s 6d. For this sum a first rate breakfast with hot and cold meats or fish, a well spread luncheon, with soup and a plentiful table d'hote dinner of five courses were supplied. The bedrooms were very comfortable and clean, and the lodgers had the use of a large coffee-room, as well as a smoking room. Private sitting rooms could also be obtained at an extra charge (Heywood, 1863, pp. 33-34).

Writer, Anthony Trollope who stayed at Menzies a decade later, was "bound to say that I have never put myself up at a better inn in any part of the world." (Trollope, 1873, p.62). However, not all commentators saw the professionalisation of hotel management as a worthy development. Sisters, Rosamond and Florence Hill, found Menzies Hotel to be very agreeable, yet they felt that the hotel manager, Archibald Menzies, "was not so amiable for ladies of [their] quality" (Hill and Hill, 1875, p. 48).

Perhaps the Misses Hills were thinking rather romantically of an era when the host treated guests as members of his family. This romantic image was a far cry from the modern business-like hotel manager of the 1860s who maintained a professional distance from both clientele and staff.

In its first incarnation, the size of a grand hotel was limited by the number of flights of stairs that a guest could manage. It was generally accepted that five floors was the upper limit. However the advent of the elevator in the 1880s effectively removed such barriers, allowing grand hotels to soar to new heights.

First hand references to the publican as “mine host” were gradually replaced by more modern terms such as “hotel-keeper” or “hotel manager” hinting at the new level of professionalism. The roles of hotel staff were also undergoing transformation. Contemporary diarists writing of post separation Victoria refer to “bar-men/ barmaids” and “waiter/waitress” rather than the more generic term of “hotel servant”. Such changes, although subtle and gradual, suggest that hotel labour had become increasingly specialized throughout the late nineteenth century.

Hotel spaces were also in transition. Elaborately decorated, formal dining rooms with separate tables replaced the communal table d’hote. However the term survived by having its meaning transformed and now came to refer to a house’s menu offerings.

Freeland’s extensive architectural survey also reminds us that the term “tap-room” had been eradicated by the 1860s reflecting different spatial utilisation practices (Freeland, 1966, p.55). Although the service of alcohol from a tap-room had been prohibited by NSW laws from as early as 1835, a publican’s obligations to separate storage and service of alcohol had been largely ignored in the primitive houses of the infant colony. The terms “tap-room” or “bar-room” were used interchangeably throughout the 1830s. The tap room of the 1830s a large, open space with minimal furnishing except for hard bench seating around its perimeter, was screened by means of a timber partition designed to secure liquor from the more light-fingered customers. The partition, evolved into a larger more solid wall with an opening and a counter for pouring drinks throughout the 1840s. From this humble beginning, the modern bar-counter evolved, and eventually dominated drinking spaces.

### **Socio-environmental conditions**

While the transition from primitive inns to modern hotels occurred gradually over three decades, rapid growth and expansion was evident during the mid to late 1850s. Clearly, the influx of migrants hoping to settle on the land, as well as those seeking their fortunes on the goldfields provided increased demand for hospitality. However, this does not fully explain the manner in which the industry expanded to service this demand. O’Mahony (2007) explains that conditions in the colony at that time provided the labour force required to meet this expansion. Unlike New South Wales, which was founded on convict labour, Melbourne had never played host to British convicts. As a result, immigrant labour schemes known as the Bounty System and the Assisted Passage Scheme were essential to the provision of this labour pool. On arrival many immigrants found that large-scale sheep farming, although lucrative, was beyond their means (Serle 1966). This was because the cost of land was inordinately high and most working people in the colony could not afford to purchase even a small holding (Connell and Irving 1980). In addition, the government was reluctant to open

up what was then Crown land and even more reluctant to divide land into small holdings (O'Mahony 2007).

One avenue by which social improvement could be achieved was through engagement with the hospitality industry. As Higgs (1991, p.70) notes "bar work was one of the few areas available to unskilled men and women", entry levels were low and the work was very well paid. Kirkby (1989) asserts, for example, bar maids were able to earn almost double the annual wage of their counterparts in domestic service and "with relatively small capital outputs, a woman could erect a humble inn with the potential to expand as the colony grew" (Higgs 1991, p. 70).

### **Conclusion**

Given that the academic field of hospitality is relatively young (Harrington and Ottenbacher, 2011), available literature on early hospitality provision is scant. In this article, however, public records, newspapers of the period and travelers' eye witness accounts of colonial life have allowed the dramatic changes in hospitality provision in Colonial Victoria to be charted. These resources have shown that the earliest inns were hastily erected primitive affairs typical of a frontier society. Demand created by population growth stimulated an expansion in the number of hotels and improvements in service levels; however, in addition to the opening up of key travel routes to service agricultural districts and the gold fields, government policy in relation to immigration and land acquisition provided an available labour force to service the hospitality sector.

The transition from inns to grand hotels was a slower process and likely to be connected to the increase in wealth and a subsequent improvement in social conditions afforded by the large amounts of gold recovered from the goldfields. The article shows that there are a number of factors that impact on hospitality provision including demand, service capability and socio-political conditions. As such it confirms O'Gorman's (2000, p. 10) contention that "with historical literature contributing to informing industry practices today and tomorrow: awareness of the past always help to guide the future".

This article has sought to generate insights into the development of hospitality in colonial Victoria, Australia, through examining the gaze of nascent tourists and travelers. This early period of Victoria's colonial history, could be defined as "nascent tourism" or "pretourism", which complies with Towner's "tourism era of discovery", a period generally neglected in histories of tourism and hospitality in Australia. The article highlights how private hospitality, that is, the provision of food and lodging by private home owners, was replaced, first by rudimentary inns and then by commercial hotels. The catalyst in this evolution, however, was the discovery of gold which opened up new routes to and from the goldfields that required rest houses along those routes.

Importantly, however, this article has contemporary application in that the catalyst or "golden moment" for commercial hospitality today, may be the opening up of new tourism destinations perhaps by low cost airlines such as Ryan Air. In such cases it is useful to review how the past can guide the future adding weight to the need to understand private, social and commercial hospitality as described by Lashley (2000). If challenges in hospitality provision are to be strategically overcome, it is important

to understand all of the characteristics of the field (Harrington and Ottenbacher, 2011). As Crick and Spencer (2011) note, hospitality organisations attempt to bridge both the domestic and commercial to deliver services in line with guests expectations. This article expands hospitality provision beyond a purely commercial activity, and unearths dimensions that may unlock future commercial potential.

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