

Mark Moss

Mark Moss was born in 1825 at Harrow on the Hill, Middlesex, England. He was first a dealer in money, then a 'traveller'. At 21 he married Rosetta Marks. He was named as Mark Moses on the marriage certificate. Six years later, on 30th June 1852, they sailed for the goldfields of Victoria with two sons, John aged one and Lewis aged two years, and Rosetta's younger sister, Maria, and husband Solomon (Jack) Abraham, a gold trader. They arrived on the *Ferrapose* in October and it would appear that the women remained in Melbourne. The women were living at 150 Great La Trobe Street when the younger son, John, died on 10th July 1853. There was an inquest, which determined that the cause of death was a 'visitation from God'. This occurred about nine months after the family's arrival, so it is likely that the men had gone to the diggings and had left the women and children behind. Melbourne was full of such women, referred to as 'grass widows'.

We are told by the family that Moss was at the 'Magpie Rush', which did not occur until the spring of 1855. The area gave up worthwhile gold for nearly two years. The diary of one gold seeker at Magpie mentions his dispute with a Jewish gold broker named Moses. Moss may have been using that name on the goldfields. In the preface to his book *History of Ballarat*, W. B. Withers describes: "A summer flood surprised the dwellers on the lowland and carried off lives as well as property, mingling a tragic sorrow with the losses of the unsuccessful." Fifteen years later, Withers visited the area and could find little more than weeds and piles of bottles.

From later records we know that a third son, Isidore, was born in 1862 and that, at the time of his marriage, he was the oldest son. It is assumed that Lewis died while the family was at Ballarat; as this event was not recorded, it is even possible that Lewis was drowned in the flood mentioned above. We hear of Mark Moss' family again when a girl, Catherine, was born in Melbourne in 1858.

The next mention of Moss is in Melbourne, when he is established in 1861 as a 'dealer' at 97 Queen Street. Later, he was living at 100 Bourke Street, where he had an office next door. His investments at that time were modest; for example: the float of the Mariners Reef Mining Co. in 1861 – by the manager Richard Schlesinger – of 15,000 shares at £1 each in which Mark Moss had but twenty shares. In the early 1870s, Moss established the Equitable Loan & Investment Society at 84 Chancery Lane. He developed a close business



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c. 1875