

Historical Series No 79

Apollos Harrison Gouge (1825-1912)

Part 1 by Philippa Horton

The South Australian Institute, then including what is now the SA Museum, was established in 1856 (Horton *et al.* 2018) and in January 1861 an 'Inaugural Soirée' was held at which the Institute was declared open to the public. A newspaper article described the events and exhibits of the soirée, and prominent among them was an extensive collection of mounted birds lent for the occasion by a Mr. A. H. Gouge¹. The specimens included an emu wren, a Ground Parrot, described even then as 'remarkably rare', and a bittern collected during Charles Sturt's 1844-1845 expedition to Central Australia. I investigated Gouge's background but unfortunately found almost no information about his ornithological connections and credentials. However, details of his numerous other activities are worth recording, as at least those prior to 1861 may offer clues as to where he collected his birds. I will now provide a biography of Gouge and in Part 2 will discuss what is known about his bird collection."

Apollos Harrison Gouge was born on 13 October 1825 in Aspatria, Cumberland, England, the fourth of five children to Reverend James Gouge, a Congregational minister, and his wife Fanny née Field, both from Kent. Most of Apollos's siblings were similarly given biblical names: Miriam, Cephas and Hephzibah. Their surname was occasionally spelt Gooze or Gooch so the vowel pronunciation was most likely similar to

'food'. The Gouge family moved in the 1830s to Polesworth, Warwickshire, where Apollos's parents spent the rest of their lives. Apollos found employment in surveying, earthworks and construction under the eminent railway engineer George Stephenson². A day short of his 18th birthday, Apollos became a father when widow and mother-of-two Rebecca Dillon (née Ewer) of Coventry, about 25 km south of Polesworth, gave birth to their son Herbert Dillon on 12 October 1843. Herbert remained with his mother, who married a widower, George Parnell, in 1845.

By 1850 Apollos Gouge was in Port Adelaide, working on construction of a wharf for the Patent Copper Company³⁻⁵. I have been unable to find his date of arrival but it was probably in the late 1840s, perhaps the 'C. Gouge' who arrived on the *William Hyde* in May 1849⁶. Apollos Gouge soon ran into financial difficulties; now a 'contractor' of Hindley Street, Adelaide, he was listed in December 1851 in the South Australian Register of Insolvencies, and in the same month sold his theodolite, sextant, and

other surveying equipment⁷, presumably to pay his debts. Nevertheless, he made the most of circumstances, having moved to Hindley Street around mid-1851. That October, the proprietor of the Star Inn on the corner of Hindley and Rosina Streets, Mary Ann Walsh, was charged with



Figure 1. Herbert Dillon Gouge in 1902, oldest son of A. H. Gouge. State Library of South Australia PRG 280/1/4/516/1.

'suffering a ferocious dog to be at large, unmuzzled, in Rosina-street'⁸. Gouge gallantly claimed the dog as his and in June 1852 he married Mary Ann, a ship captain's widow⁹; three months later, he took over the licence of the Star Inn from her¹⁰. Gouge had already been providing evening entertainment there, singing sentimental and comic songs and playing piano, violin and flute, and later claiming that the Star Inn Concert Room was 'the only place in town where a song is sung, or a tune played *correctly*'^{11, 12}.

In March 1853 Gouge took over the lease on the 'Unley Farm', earning rent from stockowners running horses and cattle on the property, and selling livestock, wheat, barley and hay^{13, 14}. In March 1855 he took up the license for the Cremorne Hotel on Unley Road¹⁵. Newspaper articles published in the early 1900s claimed that Gouge established the Cremorne Gardens and zoo at Unley, complete with South Australia's first elephant¹⁶ but they were incorrect: a Thomas Bentley was responsible for them¹⁷. Gouge's residence at Unley was short-lived, as in August 1855 he sold his household furnishings there and, among other things, musical instruments, telescopes, shotguns, saddlery, and three half-acre blocks of land in Unley Park¹⁸, and the following month he sailed for London on the *Kent*, as a cabin passenger at a cost of 80 guineas^{19, 20}. He spent several months in England before arriving back in Adelaide on 19 August 1856 on the *Poictiers*, accompanied by his now 12-year-old son Herbert Dillon²¹. Herbert, thereafter known as Herbert Dillon Gouge, completed his education at St Peter's College then worked in his father's business before becoming a shipping agent and land valuer. He was appointed as the first Public Actuary for SA in 1894 and held that position until his retirement in 1914²². As I have been unable to find a photograph of Apollos, I have included one here of Herbert (Figure 1).

A month after his return from England, Apollos Gouge advertised Double Dublin Stout, that he had selected in England, for sale from the Star Inn, or Star Hotel as it became known²³; presumably Mary Ann had continued running the hotel in his absence. To celebrate the return of the showman, in October 1856 he advertised 'Harmony and hilarity – opening dinner at the Star

Inn – come and see Gouge!', tickets 5 s. each²⁴. He also resumed work as a contractor and over the next seven years managed four major public construction projects. The first began in October 1857 when he was awarded the contract to build the Waterworks (Thorndon Park) Reservoir, which began to fill in June 1860 to provide the water supply for Adelaide²⁵⁻²⁷.

The second project, begun in October 1859²⁸, was construction of the railway line from Gawler to Kapunda, including a bridge over the Light River (Figure 2); this line was opened in August 1860, the bridge being considered a masterpiece of engineering at the time (Tiller 2021). The following year, Gouge began work on construction of a railway between Kadina and Wallaroo, and a jetty at Wallaroo²⁹. Unlike his other major projects, this was his own private enterprise, for which he set up the Kadina and Wallaroo Railway and Pier Company in late 1862³⁰. He also purchased a half-acre block of land in Wallaroo in January 1862, perhaps intending to reside there while supervising the works. The railway, completed in July 1863 with an additional branch line to the Wallaroo Smelting Works, was designed to carry locomotives but initially was used for horse-drawn vehicles, including an omnibus that Gouge modified for the purpose^{31, 32}.



Figure 2. Gouge's bridge over the Light River, south of Kapunda, constructed 1860, photographed May 1989. Image from Tiller (2012).

Prior to 1862, Port Elliot had been the main sea port in Encounter Bay. That year, the South Australian Government called for tenders to extend the Goolwa-Port Elliot tram/rail line to the safer port of Victor Harbor where a jetty was to be built. In June 1862 Gouge won the contract for the jetty and

for bridges over the Inman and Hindmarsh Rivers on either side of Victor Harbor^{33, 34}. Large amounts of timber were required for the three structures and Gouge immediately established the Victor Harbor Steam Saw Mills to supply the works and to sell timber to other builders^{35, 36}. The bridges were opened in August 1863, the Alexandra Bridge over the Hindmarsh and the Newland Bridge over the Inman, and Gouge sang at the celebratory dinner held in his works shed³⁴. The jetty was nearly complete at this time, to its stipulated length about half-way to Granite Island, but problems with bedrock meant that the planned T-head of the jetty could not easily be constructed. Gouge proposed, for minimal extra cost, to continue the jetty directly across to Granite Island as a causeway, but this was rejected by the Public Works Department and a modified Victoria Jetty was officially opened in August 1864^{37, 38}. Gouge's proposal was resurrected in 1872 and the causeway to Granite Island opened in 1875 (Anon 2021).

Aside from these major projects, Gouge was involved in other business ventures and organisations. He joined the Freemasons in March 1858, remaining a member for the rest of his life³⁹, he was chairman of the Licensed Victuallers' Association in 1859, and was elected a councillor for the City of Adelaide in December 1858 until he resigned that position in January 1860 because 'his business compelled his constant absence from town'⁴⁰⁻⁴². He ran a horse-drawn omnibus day-trip service between the Star Hotel and Glenelg from November 1858 until he sold the hotel, omnibuses and horses in May and August 1859, stating that his other engagements necessitated the disposal of his town business⁴³⁻⁴⁶. He was a director of the Mochatoona Copper Mining Company in 1859, and on the committee of the Cumberland Mining Company and a shareholder of the Kulpara Mining Company in 1861⁴⁷⁻⁴⁹.

In March 1861 Gouge leased 80 acres of farmland on Goodwood Road in what is now Daw Park, where he grew barley and hay⁵⁰. At the same time, he entered into partnership with William Knox Simms (brewer and politician) to purchase the West End Brewery, which they ran as Gouge & Simms, utilising barley from the farm, until dissolving their partnership in December 1862, after which Simms carried on the brewery business^{51, 52}. At the farm, Gouge kept draught horses, dairy cows, pigs, turkeys, geese, ducks, poultry, pigeons, guinea fowls, bee hives, and a pair of swans (species unknown but probably Black

Swans). He won prizes for poultry and for English barley at the SA Agricultural and Horticultural Shows in February 1862 and 1863, but suffered severe losses of crops and livestock in a massive hailstorm in October 1862⁵³⁻⁵⁵. The pigeons were probably for pigeon-shooting matches, in which 'sport' he was regarded as one of 'our best shots'⁵⁶⁻⁵⁸. Gouge also kept racehorses^{59, 60} and, briefly, a Bengal tiger that he purchased for £75 from a ship's captain who imported it in May 1858⁶¹. He exhibited the unfortunate tiger at the Star Hotel for a few months, charging 1s. for adults and 6d. for children, until he found a buyer in Melbourne^{62, 63}.

Gouge was notably community-minded. He sang at an anniversary dinner for old colonists and at a benefit concert for Mount Alexander (Victoria) gold escort troops in 1852^{64, 65}, at banquets honouring the safe return of explorer John McKinlay from the Burke Relief Expedition in 1862^{66, 67}, and at a building fundraiser for Christchurch in Kadina in 1863⁶⁸. He donated prizes for South Australian Society of Arts competitions from 1861 to 1863, usually for the best mechanical or architectural drawings, a prize in 1863 being awarded for an architectural drawing of the South Australian Institute building^{69, 70}. In 1861 Gouge presented to the City of Adelaide a large drinking fountain of Macclesfield marble, erected for public use in the intersection of King William and Grenfell-Currie Streets (the fountain was moved to Hurtle Square in 1867 and demolished in 1908⁷¹⁻⁷³). Gouge's 'can-do' attitude came to the fore when returning from Kadina in March 1863 and finding that the steamer was unable to pick up passengers or mail at Clinton. In company with a fellow passenger, he took charge of the mailbags, secured a small boat with two crew at Clinton, and sailed to Adelaide, getting the mail to the post office on time⁷⁴.

Despite his business success, there are indications that Gouge's income barely kept up with expenditure. In January 1861 he sold all the plant and equipment including draught horses from the reservoir construction, and in July 1863 he sold the Victor Harbor Sawmill^{75, 76}. He had lost money on the Victor Harbor contract and on his mining ventures and on 13 October 1863 declared himself insolvent, owing £19,000^{77, 78} (equivalent to \$2-4.5 million today). Two days later Gouge sold blocks of land, allotments, a town acre with home on Victoria Square, and the leases on the Cremorne Hotel and Eagle Tavern, realising a total of £2,237⁷⁹. On 28 October he sold his Goodwood Road farm animals, crops and equipment⁸⁰. In late November he sold

all the household furniture and effects from his home on the corner of North Terrace and Bank Street, including birdcages and aviaries, 1 plover, 1 coot, 2 carrier pigeons, 2 quail, 1 landrail, 2 ring doves and a kangaroo⁸¹. On 30 November he sold his collection of natural history specimens⁸², including '25 cases of stuffed birds (principally South Australian)'. Finally, on 22 December, his trustees sold the entirety of his Victor Harbor works⁸³.

Gouge promised his creditors 10s. in the pound, paid in instalments, but it appears they received only the first instalment before Gouge absconded from South Australia in early December 1863; as a consequence, appeals were made to tighten up the insolvency laws of the colony^{84, 85}. He was charged on 4 December 1863 with deserting his wife and leaving her without any means of support⁸⁶. It later transpired that he had cohabited with another woman during their marriage and had promised Mary Ann a weekly sum, but she had only ever received two sums of £3 and £2⁸⁷. The other woman may have been Angelina Dalwood (born 1840) as they had a son, Arthur James Gouge, born 27 February 1862; Angelina married William Symons Billin in 1865 and Arthur was known as Arthur Billin thereafter⁸⁸.

On 5 February 1864 the ship *Fanny Merriman* departed Sydney, bound for San Francisco via Newcastle^{89, 90}; on board was Gouge⁹¹. Another passenger was Louisa Herring, born 31 October 1842 in Adelaide and now with child to Gouge. Their son Frederick Pitcairn Gouge was born at sea on 4 April 1864, presumably somewhere near Pitcairn Island. There is no record of a marriage but thereafter Louisa was known as Gouge's wife. Gouge, with his new family, spent the next 14 years in California and Nevada, mining, working on tunnel construction for the Central Pacific Railway, and building reservoirs^{39, 92}. Their second son, Bertrand Gouge, was born at Donner Lake Village, California, on 14 September 1867. In 1878 the family moved to Canada, where Gouge prospected for gold and silver in British Columbia while based in Victoria, Vancouver Island^{92, 93}. In 1881 Gouge moved to Yale on the mainland, east of Vancouver, to work on the Yale to Savona section of the Canadian Pacific Railway^{94, 95}.

In late 1882 Gouge sailed to Australia on the *Moravian* from Vancouver Island, arriving in Melbourne on 25 November, and on 30 March 1883 departed Adelaide on the *Bowen*, arriving in

Port Darwin on 18 April⁹⁶⁻⁹⁸. He was there on behalf of an American railway company, intending to submit a tender for the Palmerston to Pine Creek railway once the SA Government passed the bill for its construction^{99, 100}. However, after lengthy delays, tenders were not finalised until May 1886 and Gouge's company did not participate. Gouge received medical advice to 'take a trip south' and he departed 6 November 1883 on the steamer *Whampoa*, arriving in Sydney a fortnight later^{101, 102}.

There are few surviving records of Gouge's activities over the next 14 years. In August 1884 he applied to the Department of Mines in Sydney for a mineral lease at Broken Hill but the lease was declared void the following year as he had not taken it up¹⁰³. His 'wife' Louisa died of alcoholism in Victoria, Vancouver Island, in 1885, aged 43, but the informant was their son Frederick, not Apollos. There is evidence that Gouge was in Adelaide, as the death certificate of Mary Ann in April 1889 stated that she was his wife and both were living in Grote Street. Mary Ann died of senile decay, aged 64; perhaps Gouge had been caring for her in her final years. In September 1890 Gouge was granted a license for the Huntsman Hotel, O'Connell Street, North Adelaide, but only two months later transferred the license to another publican¹⁰⁴. Intriguingly, however, Gouge was listed as a miner living at Bagdad (near Hampden, Otago region) in New Zealand electoral rolls of 1887 and 1890. Finally, he moved to Tasmania in about 1897, mining at Whyte River near Waratah in the north-west for the next eight years. In January 1898 he single-handedly saved the Whyte River Police Station from destruction in a bushfire, despite his age of 72 years¹⁰⁵.

Otherwise hale and hearty at 79, Gouge was suffering from cataracts and in May 1905 travelled to Adelaide for surgery¹⁰⁶. He decided to return to Canada, having not seen his sons there for 23 years, and sailed in steerage on the mail steamer *Sonoma* for San Francisco, departing Sydney on 10 July 1905¹⁰⁷. Tragically, when he arrived in Victoria, Vancouver Island on 6 August, he learned that Bertrand had died of tuberculosis that same morning¹⁰⁸. He went to live with his older son at The Shades, the hotel Frederick ran in Nanaimo, north of Victoria, and died there on 4 January 1912 aged 86¹⁰⁹.

To be concluded in the spring edition of *The Birder*.