

ANTHONY HORDERN @SONS.

Sydney's biggest Department Store.

Many of our members will remember Anthony Horder's

Christmas shopping never started until Santa landed at Circular Quay and drove up George St. to Anthony Horder's Department Store which occupied the whole block between George, Pitt and Goulburn Streets at the Haymarket in Sydney Town.

Most of Sydney would turn out to see this big event.

Most Australians believed that this Store had been started in 1825 by Anthony Horder.

Sorry to spoil the fun but this landmark Store was started by Mrs. Ann Horder. Her husband Anthony was busy managing a pub at that time and showed no interest in his wife's vision.

The former Ann Woodward emigrated with her husband, Anthony and their four children aboard *The Phoenix* in 1825.

As the ship docked in Sydney Town, Ann penned a letter to her parents in Britain to go by the Ship's return voyage. During her first visit ashore she saw that the well-dressed Ladies of Sydney Town followed the latest fashions and had the means to pay for them. She returned to the ship and added a postscript to her letter. She wrote to her father who was a Bonnet Maker and Stay Maker in Nottingham;

I wish we had about £10 of your goods that I might begin in a little way. We shall endeavour to sell some of our things and save a little if we can and buy some wool to send you to sell for us. Send the returns in Stays, cotton ginghams, prints, muslins, lace, checked shirts, silk slops, bonnet shapes, ribbons and sewing silks. I wish that you will

trust us for up to £20. We will endeavour to send you some wool for you to sell and pay for the goods. The stays must be from 24 to 30 inches and some from 27 inches as some women run large.

Ann was very quick to sum up her future market after only one day ashore in a new land.

Ann had learned the trade from her father and was well educated and intelligent, unlike her husband who was a mild mannered and relatively uneducated Wheelwright and Coachmaker.

Not wasting any time, Ann announced in the *Sydney Gazette* on the 14 July 1825 that her new business had started.

Mrs. A. Hordern, Long Stay and Corset Maker, Whalebone Manufacturer , from London, begs leave to acquaint the Ladies that she has commenced business at No.2 Upper Pitt St. Sydney.

This is on the corner of Pitt and Campbell Sts. in Sydney.

She also announced;

Stays made to order, on the shortest notice, in the most fashionable way, on reasonable terms, ready-made stays supplied with Whalebone.

Her trade flourished and in January 1827, with the arrival of the goods ordered from her parents, she had progressed from being a Stay Maker to having a General Drapery Store. She now advertised;

More bargains at Mrs. Hordern's.. We have a variety of large sized shawls, only 4 and sixpence. Silk scarves from 9 shillings, new prints and muslins are now on sale.

She now had to employ staff to cope with the sales and she advertised;

Two or three young girls aged 11 to 13 years, to learn the Stay Making business.

In 1828 she found time to help her husband run *The Coachmakers Arms Tavern* in George St. She also managed to run a stall selling her wares opposite to the Tavern,

By 1830 she was expanding and opened a Store in King St. Her advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* was;

Splendid stock of Ladies' and Children's Tuscan Bonnets.

This was with a filled-in-line drawing of a bonnet – the first illustration of its kind to be published in Australia.

She was also advertising a large range of goods such as Leghorn and Beaver Hats, coloured stays, cloth cloaks, umbrellas, Ladies Kid Gloves, boots and shoes. She now had a department for Furs such as Mink, Sable and Chinchilla. This was a far call from the Slops and Calicos of her first days.

In 1838 Ann's husband gave up his tavern and joined his wife in her thriving business. When a neighbor saw Anthony cleaning the shop windows and scrubbing down the shop-front, he thought that he was Ann's assigned Convict.

As the wealth flowed in, the Horderns purchased land in the business districts of Sydney and Melbourne. Ann would also purchase shops for her sons to manage and her daughter and husband were set up in their own business.

Anthony was now able to move from a working-class tradesman to a middle-class landowner.

Ann was always the dominant partner of the firm and Ann decided to name it *Anthony Hordern and Sons* in 1840.

The store would grow and grow and grow until it became, as *The Bulletin* wrote;

Anthony Hordern and Sons ruled the Retail Trade of the Metropolis and the Colony

The Big Store as it was known would grow and prosper until the 1980's when Sydney was expanding and new Shopping Malls were opening in the suburbs and people were now shopping locally.

The time of the large Department store in the Sydney Business centre was over. Firms such as *Grace Brothers, Farmers, Waltons*, opened new stores in the new suburbs and *Anthony Horderns* failed to recognize that retailing in Australia was changing forever.

The maintenance of the huge store in Sydney was too much and large sections were closed.

The Store finally closed forever and in 1986 the huge building was controversially demolished.

Ann Hordern built a fine business and between 1825 and 1838 bore six more children. Two sons died in infancy as did one of the sons who came with her and Anthony from England.

She was always a devoted mother and made sure that all of her children were well settled.

Forthright and hard working Ann Hordern was a remarkable woman who was both tough and fair in all of her business dealings. She was always the driving force behind her family's commercial ventures and how successful they were.

She recognized the business possibilities of early Sydney and grasped the opportunity to invest in inner-city land.

Her legacy was the foundation of the Anthony Hordern tradition that her children and their descendants were to follow.

Ann Hordern died on the 18 January 1871 aged 71 at the family home ***Retford Hall***. The business community and many citizens of Sydney Town honoured her.

Ann Hordern was the sole founder of ***Anthony Hordern and Sons*** , the greatest Retail Store in Early Australia.

(John Imrie 15/6/2020)