

## ***U3A AUSTRALIAN HISTORY.***

***Mary Penfold.***

***1820-1896.***

***Co-founder and Manager of a great Australian Winery.***

In all the books about the History of Wine making in Australia you will read about Penfolds.

Today, we would all like to be able to afford a bottle of Penfolds ***Grange Hermitage.***

In the written History of Winemaking in Australia you will read about the man who created the Wine making Company called Penfolds. Dr. Christopher Penfold.

It also makes a brief mention of his wife, Mary.

It was a time when women had no role in business affairs and they were unable to get a Bank Loan or a Mortgage.

Everything belonged to their HUSBANDS. Kids and all.

I would like to suggest to you that it was Mary Penfold and her Maid, Ellen Timbrell who founded and managed the Wine Company that would become the World famous maker of Penfolds Wines.

Mary Penfold sailed to South Australia aboard the ***Taglion*** in 1844. Her husband, Dr Christopher Penfold, had a few large debts in England and so it was off to the Colonies to escape his creditors.

The young couple had a four year old daughter, Georgina and were accompanied by a Ladies Maid Ellen Timbrell.

In their luggage were some wine vine cuttings from the Rhone in France.

In Adelaide the ship anchored a mile away downstream and the passengers were carried ashore by burly sailors. Their baggage was thrown overboard onto the mudflats and some of their valuable family goods were damaged. There was some fine porcelain and a grand piano.

Christopher Penfold purchased 500 acres of fine land for £1,200, in the foothills of the Mt. Lofty Ranges and six miles from the new city of Adelaide.

Dr. Penfold had studied medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital in England and was ready to set up a practice in South Australia.

He set up this practice in the home on his new property, The Grange Cottage.

The Penfolds were a devoted couple who would enjoy a very happy marriage. They would both work very hard to make a success of their Farm, Medical Practice and their new life in Australia.

South Australia was having a Mining boom at this time and Christopher was keen to invest and be involved.

Mary insisted that the farm was more important and should become a success before becoming involved in the Mining industry. She was now managing the farm as her husband was busy with his new patients in his surgery which was in the Dining Room of their home.

Mary, Ellen Trimball and their servant Elijah Lovelock worked at the ploughing, seed sowing, vine planting and harvesting. Entries in her Day Book showed that she kept the accounts for the farm and the Medical Practice. She paid the workers who ploughed and she purchased the farming supplies.

She and Ellen also worked in the Dr's Office keeping accounts and managing patients.

The wine cuttings brought from France were growing well in the rich soil and Mary was now turning her hand to wine making. The first bottlings were used by her husband who gave red wine to his anaemic patients.

Mary started with Port and Sherry but found that her Claret was very popular. Under Mary's careful stewardship what had started as Medicinal Wines soon became a thriving business with serious wine drinkers. At the end of the 1860's Penfold's Wines was flourishing and the demand for Fine Wines was growing in South Australia.

Dr Penfold now had a thriving Medical Practice and he was dedicated Doctor, It was a time when Medicine had few cures for major illnesses and most of his patients were poor people who were unable to pay much for his services.

He worked very long hours and was involved in the founding of St. George's Church at Woodforde. He was also Chairman of the Burnside District Council. He was not able to devote much time to the running of the Farm but he took a great interest in Mary's work with wine production and was always ready to advise and help with any problems which may arise.

Mary and Ellen had devised a new slogan to be used in advertising their products.

### *1844 to evermore.*

Penfolds sold most of their wines in Adelaide and were winning prizes in all the local shows.

Mary now decided that it was time to look for new markets in other States and to look at Melbourne which was becoming rich with the discovery of gold.

At this time the biggest hurdle was the high Tariffs that were charged on all products crossing State Borders.

Mary visited Melbourne accompanied by her 19 year old daughter, Georgina who was an attractive, intelligent young lady. It was on one of these visits that Georgina met and married a young Public Servant, Thomas Hyland.

Thomas was a very capable man and the Hyland's became the Melbourne Agents for Penfold's Wines.

In March 1870, Dr. Christopher Penfold died at the age of 59. It was a sad time for Mary and all the Penfold family.

As it was not common for women to own and manage a Company it was suggested to Mary that she should sell the Penfolds Company and retire to her home and live like a Lady should.

Mary had other ideas.

Thomas Hyland suggested to Mary that there should be a formal partnership and that Mary should continue to manage Penfolds Grange Estate and that he and Georgina should continue to manage the selling of these wines in Melbourne.

This was to be a very successful partnership.

At this time, Ellen Timbrell, who had been Mary's very able assistant, died.

Mary now had to work even harder. Thomas and Georgina had a new daughter, Inez who was not well and was sent to live with her grandmother in Adelaide as it was thought that the country air would help her.

Mary would become very close to her Granddaughter.

Thomas and Georgina changed their name to Hyland – Penfold.

In June 1874, a leading journalist visited the Penfold Grange Vineyard and was most impressed with Mary Penfold and how she managed and supervised the now famous winery. He was impressed with Mary's great knowledge of wine making.

He wrote a glowing article telling of the vast Oak barrels holding 22,000 litres of wine. These, he wrote, were made of Australian Red Gum and of English Oak. He wrote of the vast number of grapes being grown and the wide variety of wines that were being produced. Mary was progressive and would use all the technological advances being introduced.

In 1879 the Penfold Grange Estate had 280 hectares of land under vines.

Mary Penfold, Thomas Hyland-Penfold and their Cellar Master Joseph Gillard drew up a new Partnership Agreement that said that Mary was to be the Wine Maker, Joseph was to be Cellar Master and Thomas was to be the Accountant.

Thomas resigned his Public Service job to become a full time worker at Penfolds Wines.

In 1892, Inez, Mary's beloved granddaughter, died. As she had written many poems, Mary collected them and had them printed in a fine book.

### ***In Sunshine and Shadow.***

Mary now sold her beautiful house with its Regency furniture and its fine China and moved to Melbourne to live with Georgina and Thomas.

It was a sad ending to a beautiful story.

Mary died in 1896 and was buried at St Georges Church near her beloved vineyards in South Australia.

All that the *Adelaide Register* could manage to write was;

***Mary Penfold resided for 48 years at the Grange Vineyards.***

They failed to write about her contribution to the Wine Industry in South Australia. She was not said to have been a great pioneer in developing the Industry. Nothing was said about how she worked to see that tariffs were removed on all wines being sold in other States. There was nothing to say about her Management skills that made South Australian wine popular.

I could go on about the role that Mary and Ellen played in producing the finest wines that Australia has ever seen.

The Australian Wine Industry, in its wisdom, believed that the founder of Penfolds Wines and the Maker of the World famous Grange Hermitage should never be a woman and said that Dr Christopher Penfold was responsible for it all.

They even gave the impression that Mary only played a small part in all the work as she was a woman.

For 50 years after Mary's death, Grange Cottage fell into decay and was about to be demolished. It was saved by Mary's family and in 1949 it was repaired and opened as a Museum showing the achievements of Christopher and Mary Penfold.

At this time most of the original Estate had been subdivided for housing.

Penfolds Wines are now owned by Southcorp Wines and in 1980 they said in an interview on the ABC;

***Men are the main buyers of our Grange Hermitage and we like to give our finest Red a male image. We always say that the founder of Penfolds Wines was Dr. Christopher Penfold.***

You can't win 'em all girls.

Mary Penfold must now be added to the vast list of women in Australian History to stay in the background. She is in good company with Mary Reiby, Elizabeth Macarthur and Mrs. Macquarie.

(J. Imrie, August 2020)