A brief history of Australia
1850 to 1901
Gold rush to Federation

For family historians

A PERIOD OF CHANGE AND CONSOLIDATION
BOOM THEN BUST

- **CHANGES**
  - Gold rushes
  - Migration
  - Robertson Land Acts

- **CONSOLIDATION**
  - Infrastructure – railways and telegraph
  - The franchise
  - Unions and party politics
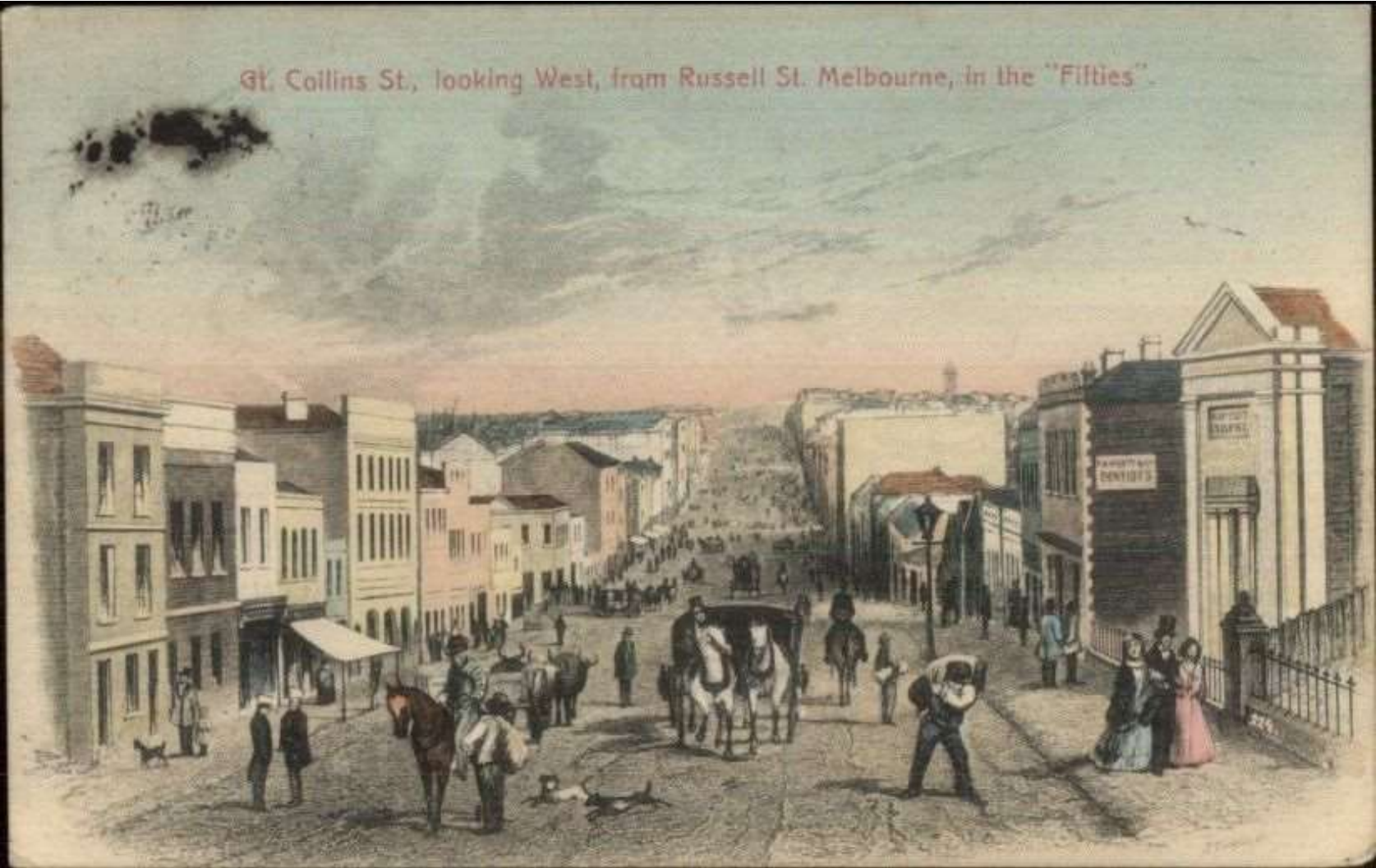
Gold Rushes 1850 – 1890s Simplified

NSW →California →New Zealand →Canada →Qld → South Africa → SA → WA

- **Shows a mobile population**
- **Look elsewhere if you find your family member on a goldfield and then 'lose' them again**
- **Check trans-Pacific communications – harder to go the other way**
- **Remember that there is a lot of pressure to take up American citizenship for incomers – taxation and record keeping – not in Australia**

BOOM

- **Growth of the cities**
- **Increased migration**
- **Robertson Land Acts**
- **Railways and telegraphs expanded across the continent**
- **rights were sought – one vote for one man**

GROWTH OF THE CITIES

Melbourne
Greater
Collins Street
1850s

Old postcard

Gt. Collins St., looking West, from Russell St. Melbourne, in the "Fifties".

COLLINS ST EAST. FROM EQUITABLE LIFE ASSURANCE CR. 107

Melbourne in 1890
Copyright
The Art Gallery of New South Wales, accessed at www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/204.1980.60/

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INCREASED MIGRATION – Causes overseas

- **1851-1855 – Crimean War – Russia against Turkey, Britain, France, Sardinia**
- **1856-1860 – Britain and China (first Opium War)**
- **1859 – Franco-Austrian War**
- **1861-1865 – American Civil War**
- **1863-1864 – Polish Revolution**
- **1866 – War between Austria and Italy, Germany and Bohemia**
- **1866-1870 – Franco-Prussian War**
- **1871-1875 – One Germany – greatly expanded**
- **1877-78 – Russo-Turkish war**

- **Was your family dislocated because of one of these wars? Mine was.**

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ABS - Australian Historical Population Statistics

NSW						
	1851	1856	1861	1871	1881	1891
Britain	81391	113114	164992	30863	511910	818156
Austria					327	588
Belgium					97	181
China		1806	12988	7220	10205	
Denmark					1069	1488
France		571	690	891	1497	2270
Germany		5245	5467	6623	7521	9565
Holland					279	284
Italy					521	1477
Portugal					165	249
Russia					322	1176
Spain					120	138
Swe/Nor					1755	3397
Switz					482	594
USA		791	1067	1340	2518	3379
VIC						
British			327850	333387	287780	180183
Other			406	285	277	1496

WHO MIGRATED - Mostly Scottish and English – now <60 days only from England – but also from other European countries

POPULATION OF AUSTRALIA 1901

- **1851 – population was approx. 400 000**

- **1851 - 1860 – 600,000 migrants arrived**
  - **83% UK;**
  - **10% European;**
  - **7% Chinese**

- **1889 – reached 3 million**

- **1901 – reached 3.8 million**
  - **77.4% Australian born**
  - **22.6% overseas born (852 373 persons – 79.7% UK and Ireland)**

ROBERTSON LAND ACTS (NSW) 1861, 1875, 1880

Officially

- Reform land holdings in NSW
- Break the squatters' hold
- Remove the limits of location or settlement
- Allow legal settlers on Crown land
  - 40-320 acres
  - £1 per acre – 5/- deposit per acre – interest free, indefinite loan as long as 5% interest per year was paid
  - Had to live on the land

Unofficially

- Fear of the mob
  - Angry, frustrated ex-gold diggers flooding the cities having seen
    - the power of the squatters
    - their failure to use the land
    - their control of food supplies
    - their low paid wages
  - Demands for rights – influence of American, Canadian and European incomers

Bourke
1869
Cobar
1870
Ivanhoe
1869
Hay
1859
Narrandera
1861
Balranald
1851 **
Deniliquin
1868

Moree
1862
Armidale
1863
Dubbo
1872
Cowra
1857
Cootamundra
1861

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:New_South_Wales_cadastral_divisions.png

Towns established after the Acts

INFRASTRUCTURE - RAILWAYS AND TELEGRAPH

- **Railways** – every state a different gauge
  - Vic – broad (1854) Melbourne to Port Melbourne
  - NSW – standard (1855) single line Sydney to Parramatta
  - SA – broad (1856) single line Adelaide to Port Adelaide
  - Qld – narrow (1865) single line Ipswich to Bigges Camp (on way to Toowoomba)
  - Tas – broad (1871) Deloraine to Launceston (converted to narrow in 1888)
  - WA – narrow (1879) Geraldton to Northampton
- **Telegraph**
  - Vic – 1854   NSW – 1857
  - SA – 1855   Qld - 1861
  - Tas – 1857   WA - 1869
  - Overland telegraph completed in 1872 – no longer an isolated country

BUST – THE 1890s

- **The crash – no longer a 'working man's paradise'**
- Property values crashed
- There was a British banking crises – dried up loan monies – caused local bank collapses, unemployment, drop in tax revenue, an end to development
- Prices for wheat and wool fell
- Severe drought
- Massive national strikes in the maritime industries – wharfies and sea men
- Coal miners, train workers, shearers joined in
- Lead to increasing nationalism – art, music, poetry, newspapers, anti-migrant
- Growth of political activists – Labor Party, New Australia, suffragettes

Family history in the 1890s

- Increasing unemployment and poverty

- Increasing movement of people **from** the country, **to** the country and around the country as trade unionists and strikers lost their jobs and free (or scab) labour took over especially in the shearing industry

- Other records becoming more common – photos, newspapers, family letters, postcards

Photograph by William Henry Corkhill
Held by the National Library of Australia
Pic-an2441678 TLF resource R3181
Living on the goldfields

http://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/wa-goldfields/rush-gold/on-track

Bonzle
Pictures
Qld
1890s

Perren family portrait, Nambour 1890s
Held in the Bonzle collection. Contributor unknown

Image from Bonzle.comCopyright unknown. Queen Street Brisbane during the 1893 flood – family paint and wallpaper shop on righthand side on the ground floor of the building marked

Bridge Street
November 30th 1898

Gentlemen
I respectfully apply for £12 Compensation for damage done to my property in Bridge Street by a Tree which fell November 21st —

List of things destroyed
21 feet of Wire Netting Picket fence and Gate, Hinge Pane of Glass, Weather board Frame for Creepers & Three Flower pots. Also the injury done to the garden which I consider my greatest loss as the shade which I enjoyed for years has been taken away by the damage done to Lyus Creepers & a large Grape Vine.

Hoping this will receive your consideration
I have the honor to remain
Yours obediently
Catherine Flood

Federation - 1901

- NSW, Vic, Tas, Qld, SA (and NT) and WA (late to agree) federated officially 1 January 1901 by a British Act of Parliament May 1900 – 'granted' independence

- Also had the opportunity to add NZ and Fiji – would have been named Australasia

- Federal govt responsible for

Taxation, defence, foreign affairs, postal and telecommunications

- States responsible for all else including BDMs

- Although independent states – there were no borders so movement was easy – still is