

St Peter's



Dear Sir or Ma'am,

My father has enrolled me in St Peter's Denominational School and so I write to introduce myself. My name is Jack and I am 11 years old. My father is a Merchant who is often away travelling. My mother keeps house and also works on occasion mending clothes. I have an elder sister who is working as a maid for the McKenzie's and three younger siblings.

We arrived in Ballarat only one month ago after a dreadful four month voyage aboard the clipper from Liverpool. Father secured Cabin Class tickets, but even so, the conditions were dreadful.

Neither the stench nor the rats stayed in the lower decks. A number of our pickled vegetable barrels were lost to rot and so we had little to eat beyond salted meat and stale bread. Many passengers were showing signs of scurvy by the time we arrived in Melbourne.

We recovered in Melbourne for some weeks and waited for father to join us. The coach to Ballarat was much better than the ship and only took us one day. We passed many fortune seekers struggling on foot.

One of father's clients let us to stay in the room behind his shop while our cottage was finished. We have just now moved in. It is a simple home of two rooms, but mother hopes that soon we will have enough money to build a proper kitchen. I am just glad to be up the hill and away from the rabble down at the creek. My little sister is helping mother sew curtains as I write.

It is so much hotter here than back home in England. Everything is so brown and dusty. Mother is not very happy here, but father assures her that we will do well. He says he can sell his goods at a much higher price here and hopes that within another five years he will be able to build us a brick house.

Father expects that in a few years, after I finish school, I will join him in his business. He says I have a good head for numbers. I do all the shopping for Mother so I can practice my arithmetic with the shillings and pence. I hope I can carry on his good name.

Yours faithfully,

Jack Smith

