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978-0-521-68987-8 - A History of Victoria
Geoffrey Blainey
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A HISTORY OF VICTORIA

Geoffrey Blainey has written over thirty books, including *A Short History of the World*. Here, he turns his attention to the state in which he was born and raised.

This lively and fascinating account takes the reader from the time Aboriginal people could walk across Bass Strait through to the present day. We learn about the coming of the overlanders with their flocks, some of the biggest gold rushes the world has seen, the boom of the 1880s and the bank crashes that followed. Blainey vividly describes Melbourne's time as the federal capital, and with an extraordinary eye for detail traces Victoria's recovery from drought, depression and bushfire, and considers its transformation from a rural to a cosmopolitan urban society. He speculates on the differences between Sydney and Melbourne, and describes the transformation of a once-puritanical state to today's world of casinos and gambling. He concludes this remarkable history with a fascinating account of the state's fall from grace, the collapse of the Cain government, the turbulent Kennett years and the rise of the Bracks government.

This book describes Victoria's unique position within Australian history and sheds new light on many of the people and events that have shaped the entire nation.

Geoffrey Blainey is Emeritus Professor at the University of Melbourne.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was first published in 1984 as *Our Side of the Country*. For this third edition there has been extensive rewriting. Old chapters have been repaired, sometimes being condensed and sometimes enlarged. New chapters have been added. The original arrangement of the story in three parts has been replaced by a two-part division. In revising the book I gained help from Tim Warner, Dr Peter Yule, and Alistair Urquhart and his 'Letter from Melbourne'. New printed sources of information are listed in the Sources.

My gratitude is expressed to Raylee Singh for editing this new edition, to Tony Fankhauser for drawing new maps and revising old, and to Kim Armitage who, on behalf of Cambridge University Press, proposed that I produce a new version of an old book.

May 2006

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

My aim was to write a book which was short rather than long. Hence I chipped away at each chapter in order to reduce its length. At the same time I tried not to make the story too tight, too abbreviated: I did not want it to taste like condensed water.

I divided this history of Victoria into three parts in order to give more weight to that kind of social history which we often neglect. The first part examined Victoria from the coming of the Aborigines to the end of the boom in the early 1890s. The second part looked at

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everyday life, especially around the turn of the century, with glimpses backwards and forwards. And the third part took up the story in the depression of the 1890s and ran through to the present.

I am grateful to Ian McLaren who gave me, many times, the benefit of his knowledge of Victorian history and its sources; to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for permission to use extracts from my essay on the history of leisure which was published in *The Victorian Historical Journal* of February 1978; to Thomas Nelson Australia and David Syme & Co whose book *125 Years of Age* published some of my remarks, repeated here, about David Syme and his newspapers; to Frank and Keir Strahan for finding many of the illustrations used in the book and to the University of Melbourne Archives for allowing us to use them; to Marion Adams, Eric Bird, Anna Blainey, Max Chamberlain, Sir Ernest Coates, Sir Ronald East, Judith Keene, Margaret Manion, Dinny O'Hearn, Bob Phillips, Colin Richards, George Slater and Frank Waters for guiding me to information or for correcting errors; to Liz Carey who typed the manuscript; to Suzie Boxshall who drew the maps; to Elizabeth Wood Ellem who made the index; and to Susan Haynes for her skill as editor and publisher.

January 1984

CONVERSIONS

Length

1 inch = 2.54 centimetres

1 foot = 30.5 centimetres

1 yard = 0.9 centimetres

1 mile = 1.6 centimetres

Mass

1 ounce = 28.3 grams

1 pound = 454 grams

1 ton = 1.02 tonnes

Area

1 acre = 0.4 hectares

1 square yard = 0.836 square metres

Volume

1 cubic yard = 0.7 cubic metres

1 bushel = 0.0364 cubic metres

Volume (fluids)

1 gallon = 4.55 litres

Currency

There were 2 farthings in a halfpenny, 2 halfpennies in a penny, 12 pennies in 1 shilling, and 20 shillings in £1. When Australia converted to decimal currency in 1966, \$2 were equal to £1.