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The Discovery and Settlement of Port Mackay, Queensland

Port Mackay is a district of Queensland, Australia, best known for its production of cane sugar. It was first settled in the 1860s, when John Mackay (1839–1914) successfully completed a mission to claim farmland and introduce agriculture there. First published in 1908, this study by the businessman and keen amateur anthropologist Henry Ling Roth (1855–1925) explores the district's history, tracing its development from an uncharted territory barely noticed by early European explorers to a burgeoning community that profited from its ideal conditions for cultivation. Drawing on extensive notes from his visits to the region over thirty years, as well as some fascinating anecdotal accounts from settlers, Roth explores the achievements of Port Mackay's early colonists in agriculture, industry and sea trading. The book contains maps and photographs, and includes a short account of the local Aboriginal population, and substantial notes on natural history and sporting pursuits.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-03933-8 - The Discovery and Settlement of Port Mackay, Queensland
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Frontmatter
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HENRY LING ROTH



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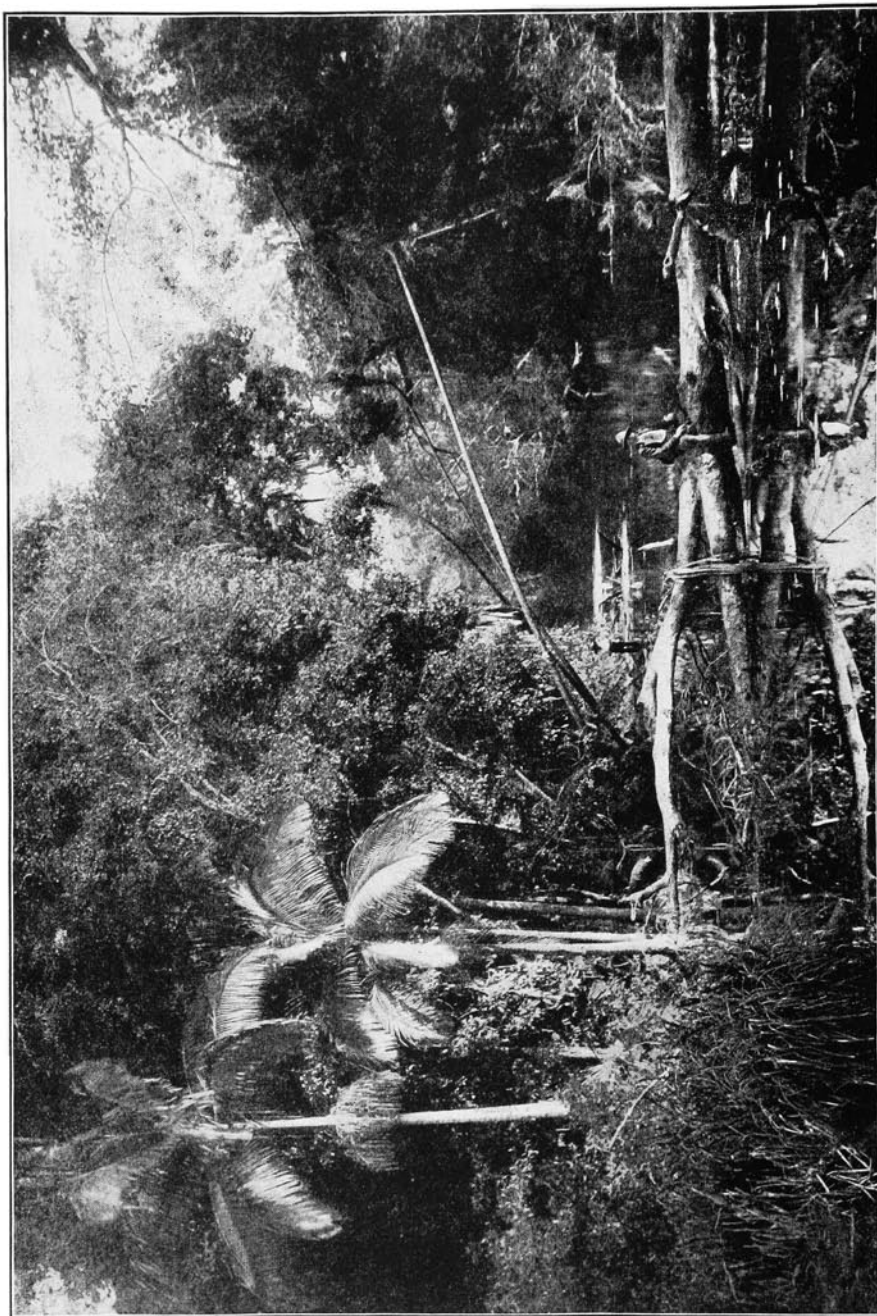
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PORT MACKAY, QUEENSLAND.



FRONTISPIECE.—Habana Creek. E. M. Long in the foreground. From a photograph by G. H. M. King (Fryer) taken in 1887.

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THE
DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT
OF
Port Mackay, Queensland

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS,
CHARTS AND MAPS,
AND SOME NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY
OF THE DISTRICT

BY

H. LING ROTH

At one time HON. SEC. of the MACKAY PLANTERS' AND FARMERS' ASSOCIATION.

Author of "A GUIDE TO THE LITERATURE OF SUGAR;"

"THE ABORIGINES OF TASMANIA;"

"THE NATIVES OF SARAWAK AND BRITISH NORTH BORNEO;"

"GREAT BENIN: ITS CUSTOMS, ART AND HORRORS;"

&c., &c.

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ERRATA.

- Page 24. Line 12, for aboriginal *read* aboriginal
.. 25. Fig. 7, line 6, for Fitroy *read* Fitzroy
.. 32. Line 8, for Leichardt *read* Leichhardt
.. 48. Plan for Sidney St., *read* Sydney St.
.. 50. Line 9, for Murnin *read* Murmin
.. 56. Line 24, for Alex Ewen *read* Alex Mc'Ewen
.. 56. Line 28, for Wilmett *read* Wilmott
.. 57. Lines 5 and 6, for Read *read* Reid
.. 72. Line 36, for Lirchhardt *read* Leichhardt
.. 72. Line 36, for Ulphinstone *read* Elphinstone
.. 83. Line 9, for R. G Turner *read* R. E. Turner
.. 88. Lines 23, 35, and 36, for Pleystone *read* Pleystowe
.. 89. Line 2, for R. K. Graham *read* R. W. Graham
.. 94. Line 30, for purusing *read* perusing

 *This Book is limited to one edition of 250 Copies for sale in the British Islands and Abroad.*

PREFACE.

THE collection of notes for this little work was begun some thirty years ago, when I went out to Port Mackay, and originated in the fact that it was at all times difficult to get authentic information as to the discovery of the country, and as to the doings of the colonists who settled it. The first local newspaper, *The Mackay Mercury*, was started in 1866, but as the editor, when he afterwards left the district, carried away with him all copies of the paper up to the beginning of 1867, it may be said there are no printed records earlier than 1867. A year or two ago the proprietors of the *Mercury* published a *resumé* of events from the first of January, 1867 onwards. I have, therefore, only dealt with the district's history up to that year.

Besides my own notes, I am indebted to other colonists for information which is acknowledged in the text. Apart from these, a very thorough search has been made at the British Museum and the Record Office (Admiralty and Colonial Papers) for any particulars which might throw further light on the doings of the early explorers on the coast, or which might confirm what has been published elsewhere. Notes so obtained have been incorporated in the work.

The book being essentially prepared for Queensland readers, who in many cases have not easy access to books of travel, such as those of Cook, Flinders, King, etc., which deal with the coast of the Mackay District, and of others, which, like *Leichhardt's Journal*, are not often met with even in Second-hand Book Circulars (when I was in Mackay there was only one copy, and that was in the hands of M. Hume Black, M.L.A.), I have, where it seemed to me to be necessary, given fairly full extracts from these works, so that the local readers can have their information as much at first hand as is possible.

It may at first sight seem to be stretching a point a little by quoting travels so far in land as those of Leichhardt, but Leichhardt's journey led him within the watershed from which wool was sent down to Port Mackay for shipment, when the Pioneer River was discovered, which watershed still remains largely within the sphere of the Port's activities.

Some of the illustrations are from photographs, mostly made by Boag and Mills (afterwards Reckitt and Mills), which I brought home with me, others are from photographs taken by my friends C. C. Rawson, G. H. M. King and E. J. Welch, and others have been lent me by J. Ewen Davidson. Some of the older ones dating back to 1866 have not come out so clearly as they might have done, because a clayed surface paper has not been used—the work being mainly intended for use in the tropics and semi-tropics, where such paper quickly deteriorates. The illustrations from photographs are of the year 1866 and onwards.

For the guidance of Home readers, explanatory notes have been inserted where it seemed to me they are required.

H. LING ROTH.

ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE,
LONDON, 25th February, 1908.

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INTRODUCTION.

PORT MACKAY is situated in Lat. $21^{\circ} 9' S$, Long. $149^{\circ} 14' E$, and its site with the surrounding country was discovered by Captain John Mackay in 1860, the curious part about the discovery being the fact that the district had remained unknown until the country to the South, West and North had been discovered, and more or less settled. The link between Leichhardt's track, the only *early* land track approaching the district, and Captain Mackay's is as follows:—A. C. Gregory, coming from the Gulf Country in 1856, touched Leichhardt's line of exploration, and then continued his southern course until he arrived at Conner and Fitz's Station, on the Dawson River; Conner afterwards moving up north, to Princhester, where he was in 1859 overtaken by Captain Mackay.

The District of Port Mackay is the chief seat of the Sugar Industry in Queensland, and is inhabited by a class of people who are second to none in Australia for "go-aheadness." On one occasion, when the Government declined to grant them certain reforms, they elected JOHN BRIGHT to represent them in the Legislative Assembly, an honour he naturally declined; but they have always returned men to Parliament who have left their mark on the legislation of the State. It was, on the carefully prepared representation of a Mackay Planter, G. H. M. King, that the late Sir Thomas McIlwraith hoisted the British Flag in New Guinea. The coast of this District was at one time noted for its Dugong Fishery, carried on by a Devonshire gentleman named Ching. Mackay was once the home of Madame Melba.

It enjoys a delightful semi-tropical climate, and is surrounded by a fairly high range of forest covered hills from which lovely views may be had, not only of the country itself, but also of the islands which dot the coast where Captain Cook pluckily steered his craft 139 years ago.