

The Argus, Melbourne, Friday Jan 29, 1909

To the Editor of the Argus - "The Ticonderoga"

Sir,

I was very much interested in reading Mr. Donald McDonald's article in *The Argus* of the 8th instant also on the 15th and further, a letter from Mr. J McRae concerning the ill-fated ship the *Ticonderoga*. There are some slight errors I would like to put right. The ship *Ticonderoga* sailed from Birkenhead (not Liverpool as Mr. McRae says) in July, 1852. Captain Boyle was in charge, and his brother, the purser, was buried at Point Nepean. All went well until we crossed the line. The first death was that of a child, and a few days after some of the passengers sickened and died, and others followed, until I saw more than once ten buried in one day. They were tied up in bedding and mattresses all together and thrown overboard, to float away, as there was nothing to weight the corpses with. If we had not got to land when we did I do not think there would have been many left to tell the tale. We could not get a pilot to come on board to pilot us through the Rip. They were afraid of the fever. The Captain had never been in Melbourne, and he would not take the risk; but one of the sailors, who had been through several times, steered us through the Rip. After we sailed about a mile we cast anchor, and the passengers were landed as quickly as possible. There was very little canvas for tents, so they had to make bush mia-mias, like blackfellows, and camp in them. My father was a constable on board the ship. He had charge of the young ladies' compartment, and the whole of his time was taken up in administering to the wants of the sick and dying, under the doctor's orders, both on board ship and at the quarantine grounds. We landed at Point Nepean in October and were there seven or eight weeks. The berths and all movables were taken out, and the ship disinfected. Before we made a start for Melbourne many of the passengers' remains were buried at Point Nepean. The ship *Lysander*, afterwards turned into a hulk for the very worst prisoners, was sent down from Melbourne to be a hospital ship. The most serious cases were sent on board her, to be under the eye of the doctor, who had experience of yellow fever, for that was the fever on the *Ticonderoga*, not scarlet fever, as Mr. McRae says. I myself was one of the worst cases. I lost my only sister at sea. I do not think that there were three families who had not a death in the family; in some cases father and mother were taken, and children left.

When we reached Hobson's Bay we could not get a steamer to take us to land. They were afraid of the plague ship, as they termed her; so we were over a week in the bay. At last a steamer came and took the passengers of the *Ticonderoga* to land. We landed on New Year's day, 1853, on the banks of the Yarra, and after all the sickness and deaths and heartrending scenes we got the credit of being the finest looking lot of emigrants who had come to Melbourne. My brother and I are survivors, and we are still hale and hearty.

JAMES DUNDAS

Mansfield, January 25.

Additional Notes:

James Dundas, from Aberdeen, Scotland was 9 years old at the time of the *Ticonderoga* voyage. He arrived in Australia with his mother, Isabella (36), father Lewis (34) and brother Alexander (11). His sister, Elizabeth Dundas aged 2, died on the voyage.

Transcribed from original by Julie Ruzsicska, 1 March 2001