

# Hoey Ah Gouy Sang (Henry Anguey)

By Natalie Lonsdale



Hoey Ah Gouy Sang was born in 1836 in the area between Hong Kong and Canton (now known as Guangzhou) in China.<sup>1</sup> Nothing is known about his life in China before he migrated to Australia in his early twenties. Conditions in China at that time were incredibly difficult. Famine, poverty, floods, over population and foreign invasions saw a strain on everyday resources, and many Chinese were looking for prospects elsewhere. The official end of the transportation of convicts to New South Wales in 1840, and the discovery of gold in Victoria was an opportunity for many Chinese to migrate to Australia, to the place they called Dai Gum San, or 'The New Gold Mountain'.

There is some contention between the descendants of Hoey concerning his arrival to Australia. No records can be found of him arriving in Victoria or New South Wales, and unfortunately there are no known passenger lists of the Chinese arrivals into Robe, South Australia. Due to the absence of Hoey on the passenger lists, it is likely he sailed from Hong Kong to Robe in the 1850s. In 1855, the Victorian government had introduced "An Act to make Provisions for Certain Immigrants" to curtail the arrival of Chinese migrants onto the Victorian goldfields. Surface alluvial gold was becoming limited, and the Chinese were seen as an economic threat. As a result, a £10 poll tax was introduced for each Chinese migrant to be paid on arrival into Victoria.<sup>2</sup> Ballarat and Bendigo Chinese community members, along with their non-Chinese supporters protested against the tax, so the plan to arrive via South Australia, thus avoiding the tax, was born.<sup>3</sup> A total of thirty-nine Ships sailed to Robe between 1857 and 1863.<sup>4</sup> Over 16,000 Chinese migrants arrived at Robe and made their way to Victoria by foot, walking over 500 kilometres through bushland.<sup>5</sup> They would walk up to 20 miles per day, leaving directions and messages of instruction for water and supplies for fellow migrants following, by carving Chinese characters into trees.<sup>6</sup>

Hoey came from a storekeeping family. Upon arriving in Australia, he phonetically anglicised his name to Henry Anguey, a common practice by both officials and Chinese migrants at that time. He put his skills to work supplying miners with their everyday needs. Records are scarce from the early days of the gold rush. Makeshift towns would spring up out of nowhere as gold was found, only to disperse just as quickly as the diggers moved on to try their luck at the next strike. Grocery stores were usually in tents and Hoey likely followed his customers from one rush to the next. There are no known records of Hoey's movements until 1870, when he married Elizabeth Sharp, the fifteen-year-old daughter of English migrants Joseph and Maria.<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth's family were prospecting in the settlement of Little Hard Hills, south of Ballarat. Hoey was living nearby at Surface Point, Mount Misery. Surface Point was a Chinese settlement bordering the Mount Misery Creek.<sup>8</sup> There is an interesting description of the camp in a newspaper article in October 1864. Accusations of a spurious gold manufactory at the camp "...affording steady employment to a number of industrious Chinese..." was being investigated by Inspector Stoney and Detective Daly from Smythesdale.<sup>9</sup>

*"After a long ride over a barren range of country, a portion of which...bears a strong family likeness to New Zealand, the riders at length reach the heights overlooking the Chinese camp, a very cosy, compact little township, containing about 400 residents, and possessing a large number of stores, together with a joss-house, a well furnished lottery-house, and gambling saloon."*<sup>10</sup>

By 1874 there were around 700 Chinese living in the area, mining and operating extensive market gardens near a communal hut.<sup>11</sup> They placed quartz rocks on either side of their walking paths so that on moonlit nights, the quartz shone, enabling them to see their way in the dark.<sup>12</sup> It was where Hoey and Elizabeth began their life together.

There must have been regular interactions between the Chinese on Mount Misery and other mining families in the area, because Anguey family folklore tells that Elizabeth would declare "I'm going to marry that man" every time Hoey walked by!<sup>13</sup> Hoey was thirty-four years old, but their marriage certificate records him as twenty-four and Elizabeth as eighteen.<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth's parents would have perceived Hoey a suitable match for their daughter. Marrying her off to a successful shopkeeper, provided her with protection, and them with one less mouth to feed. Unlike their European counterparts, Chinese men rarely imbibed, which would have made Hoey an even more desirable catch.

A little over a year later when Elizabeth was sixteen, she gave birth to the couple's first child, a daughter named Elizabeth Chawgood. Elizabeth's birth was registered in a place called Spring Creek which was within a day's walk from the Mount Misery Chinese camp.<sup>15</sup> In 1875, Hoey's second child and first son was born at Mount Misery. They named him Robert Win Quey.<sup>16</sup> From 1876 to 1887 Elizabeth gave birth to seven more children, three sons and four daughters at the Chinese camp on Mount Misery.

In October 1888 Hoey and Elizabeth welcomed twin boys, with the assistance of midwife Mrs A Linguiey.<sup>17</sup>

What a remarkable woman Elizabeth was, giving birth time and again in a gold mining camp in the middle of the Australian bush – a testament of the strong and robust women that dotted the Victorian goldfields at that time. A year later the eldest twin Henry came down with Bronchitis. He was rushed to Ballarat hospital, but tragically died a week later, one day short of his first birthday.<sup>18</sup> Two years later, in 1892, when Hoey was fifty-five years old and Elizabeth thirty-six, the couple had their twelfth and final child, a daughter named Ethel May.



Sometime after Ethel was born, the family moved to Melbourne. They set up their grocers' shop at 116-118 Little Bourke Street in the city, before moving to better premises at 138 Little Collins Street. By 1903 Henry's four eldest sons were all in their twenties and the shop was named Anguey & Sons. In 1904 Hoey moved his family to 99 Queensberry Road, Carlton. A year later, three days before Christmas, Hoey's wife Elizabeth died. Hoey continued to run the shop with his children until he succumbed to heart failure at the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum, Cheltenham on 10 June 1923. He was eighty-six years old. The Benevolent Asylum had been moved from its premises in North Melbourne to brand-new premises in the seaside suburb of Cheltenham in 1911. By the 1920s the Asylum had a Concert Hall, ventilated wards, self-sufficient vegetable gardens, manicured grounds and a lake. It was a place where many Victorians lived well into their old age and was by all accounts a most pleasant place for Hoey to spend his last days.<sup>19</sup> Hoey and Elizabeth are buried together at the Kew cemetery.

4. Fiona Ritchie, *Guichen Bay to Canton Lead the Chinese trek to gold, Robe*, District Council of Robe, 2004, p. 48-49.
5. Culture Victoria, 'Arrival of Chinese immigrants to Little Bourke St, Melbourne, c1866'.
6. Golden Dragon Museum, *The walk from Robe, Bendigo*, Bendigo Chinese Association Museum Inc, 2001, <https://www.punctum.com.au/sites/default/files/files/Walk%20From%20Robe%20Book%20Scan.pdf>, Accessed 27 December 2021.
7. Marriage record for Ah Gouy Sang and Elizabeth Sharp, married 25 July 1870, 'Victoria, Australia, Marriage Index, 1837-1950', Ancestry.com, Accessed 18 January 2022.
8. Marriage record for Ah Gouy Sang and Elizabeth Sharp.
9. 'Victoria', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, October 13 1864, p. 4.
10. 'Victoria'.
11. Dorothy Letcher, 'Enfield, Whim Holes and Little Hard Hills', An address to the Buninyong and District Historical Society, 8 August 1991.
12. Carol Clarke née Anguey to Natalie Lonsdale, personal communications, 2021.
13. Clarke née Anguey to Lonsdale.
14. Marriage record for Ah Gouy Sang and Elizabeth Sharp.
15. Birth record for Elizabeth Chawgood Anguey, born 23 September 1871, Registrar of Birth Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 26488/1871, Accessed 19 January 2022.
16. Birth record for Robert Win Quey Anguey, born 1874, 'Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922', Ancestry.com, Accessed 19 January 2022.
17. Birth record for Walter Earnest Anguey Sang and Henry Albert Anguey Sang, born 23 October 1888, Registrar of Birth Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 28707 / 1888, Accessed 19 January 2022.
18. Death record for Henry Albert Anguey Sang, died 22 October 1889, Registrar of Birth Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 14938 / 1889, Accessed 19 January 2022.
19. 'Centenarians in Asylum', *The Argus*, 3 August 1923, p. 14.

1. Death record for Henry Anguey, died 10 June 1923, 'Victoria, Australia, Death Index, 1836-1988', Ancestry.com, Accessed 18 January 2022.
2. Culture Victoria, 'Arrival of Chinese immigrants to Little Bourke St, Melbourne, c1866', <https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/immigrants-and-emigrants/language-a-key-to-survival-cantonese-english-phrasebooks-in-australia/arrival-of-chinese-immigrants-to-little-bourke-st-melbourne-c1866/>, Accessed 18 January 2022.
3. Anna Kyi, 'The most determined sustained diggers resistance campaign' Chinese protests against the Victorian Government's anti-Chinese legislation 1855 – 1862', [https://prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/provenance-journal/provenance-2009/most-determined-sustained-diggers-resistance#\\_edn12](https://prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/provenance-journal/provenance-2009/most-determined-sustained-diggers-resistance#_edn12), Accessed 10 October 2021.



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