



THE PIONEER

RURAL & RESIDENTIAL
PROPERTY

Frank the Poet *A Convict's Tour to Hell*

BANISHED NOW FROM MY NATIVE SHORE

The Works of Frank The Poet

A contemporary look at the works of convict poet Francis McNamara



This edition of the Pioneer will take a brief look at the life of Stroud's first poet.

As we know, Stroud was settled by the Australian Agricultural Company (A A Company) and employed a large number of convicts. One of our convicts was "Frank the Poet", or Francis MacNamara. McNamara's 'Company' name was 'Goddard'. He was known by other names as well.

MacNamara arrived in Australia on 8 September 1832 from Ireland after being sentenced for seven years for stealing. He was a repeat offender in Australia, receiving many lashes and being sent from place to place, ending up in Stroud during 1838-39. In 1849 he received his ticket of freedom from Tasmania. MacNamara was believed to have died in Sydney around 1853. However,

the Australian Dictionary of Biography has him dying in 1861. MacNamara's year of death is confirmed as 1861 in the report of his death. Interestingly, in this report it is noted that MacNamara was also known as Hill.

Frank wrote poetry and songs. There is some contention around the idea of MacNamara 'writing' poetry and songs as he is believed to have been illiterate, but someone with a good memory who could recite his own work. He is well known for one particular piece written during his time in Stroud. MacNamara wrote 'The Convict's Tour to Hell', while working as a shepherd at Stroud in October 1839. MacNamara's work was enjoyed by the convicts due to 'their spirited opposition to the 'System''. You can find MacNamara's work in many publications including Stroud Writer's *Idylls Along the Karuah* and in an album of Frank's work put to music by a collection of musicians, *Banished Now from my Native Shore: The Works of Frank the Poet*. In the late 1970s, folklorists Rex Whalan and John Meredith pieced together the poems and true identity of Frank the Poet from information found in oral histories, family albums, and libraries on the east coast of Australia.

Here are two excerpts from 'The Convict's Tour to Hell' which appear to give a nod to Stroud and the A A Company.

*Nor can the foremost of the sons
of men
Escape my ribald and licentious pen
You prisoners of New South Wales,
Who frequent watchhouses and
gaols
A story to you I will tell
'Tis of a convict's tour to hell.*

....

*Postrate I beheld a petitioner
It was the Company's
Commissioner
Satan said he my days are ended
For many years I've superintended
The An. Company's affairs
And I punctually paid all arrears
Sir should you doubt the hopping
Colonel
At Carrington you'll find my journal
Legibly penned in black and white
To prove that my accounts were
right
And since I've done your will on
earth
I hope you'll put me in a berth
Then I saw old Sergeant Flood
In Vulcan's hottest forge he stood
He gazed at me his eyes with ire*

This information was obtained from the following sources:

Mark Gregory, 'Frank the Poet', accessed at <http://frankthepoet.blogspot.com.au/> on 5 June 2014.

Obituaries Australia, Francis MacNamara, accessed at <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/macnamara-francis-13073> on 5 June 2014.

Australian Dictionary of Biography, accessed at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macnamara-francis-13073> on 5 June 2014.

Stobie Sounds Pozible Project: *Banished Now From My Native Shore*, accessed at <http://www.pozible.com/project/4403> on 7 June 2014.

Written by Sharon Burke (2014).