**Essays on Mount Crosby - Marstaeller and the Crimea**

The Crimea is back in the newspapers, as disputed places regularly are. Mount Crosby has an indirect connection to the Crimea through Johann Marstaeller, after whom the little road near the school is named. Details of Johann’s emigration are a little sketchy, but a roving reporter’s chance visit to properties in the Kholo district in July 1877 has left us with some credible details.

*"Mr Marstaeller has 500 acres of land and 75 head of cattle. He cultivated 30 acres of mixed crops like a sensible man. He is a Frenchman - all the way from France and he escaped the conscription of the Crimean War very neatly. It is just as well for him to be Lord of 500 acres in Queensland - better, indeed, than that his bones should be decaying in the trench before the fatal Malakoff redoubt.”*

The Crimean War had complex roots and unexpected allies. In one version of the events, the English were worried about Russian designs on Europe after the fall of Romania to Russia in 1854. Romania was then part of a shaky (Turkish) Ottoman Empire that the English had been trying to safely dismantle by forming it into a bloc of independent countries prepared to defend themselves against the Russians. The formation of independent Greece was the only result of these efforts before the Russians and Turks unexpectedly declared war later in 1854. France and England were forced to support the Turks, or more particularly, to protect their interests in the Near East. Almost all of the war was fought in southern Russia and the objective of the allied forces can be summarised as “take the great naval port of Sevastopol”.

They fought through the summer of 1854 and into the following winter, for which the troops were ill prepared and suffered terribly. It was so cold that heavy recruiting was necessary just to replace those who froze to death. A sense of the dominating effect of the cold can be gained from the namesake Raglan coat and sleeves, coined for Lord Raglan, leader of the British expeditionary forces; the cardigan named for Lord Cardigan, Cavalry Commander of the famous Light Brigade; and the Balaclava cap, named after the place of the famous but futile charge into the valley of death just five miles from Sevastopol.

Not far from Sevastopol was the tower known as Fort Malakoff mentioned in the reporter’s quote. A terrible battle for survival was fought there by the French until September of 1855, when it and Sevastopol eventually fell to the Allies and the war was essentially over.

Johann Marstaeller was indeed wise to examine the options to a freezing winter of war in the Crimea. Mount Crosby also benefitted from Johann's ability to make good decisions, one of which was his successful advocacy for a school at Mount Crosby in the first place.

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