**Essays on Mount Crosby - Russian Boy Drowns 1913**

In the early twentieth century there was a small but noticeable wave of Russian migrants to Australia who sought to avoid the straightenings of tsarist rule and the shortage of arable land at home. Some Russians made their way to Australia before 1905, but it wasn't many because their way to Australia was usually via England and it was prohibitively expensive.

However, after their defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, Russians began to leave the territories ceded to the Japanese and some, though obviously not most, travelled south to Australia on merchant vessels (ironically mostly Japanese), encouraged by heavily subsidised fares. Since vessels on this Pacific route often stopped first in Queensland ports, many Russians expediently disembarked here, quite unaware of the relative superiority of Sydney and Melbourne.

All the better for Queensland really, but the Russian migrants were different to us and the usual suspicions surrounded them. It was beyond most people's doubt that many had escaped the laws of the tsar or were impatient bolshies who couldn't wait for a revolution; but most were just persecuted hard working people for whom the necessity to leave home became an opportunity to settle in Australia. Although invited to Queensland, they found work hard to get unless it was backbreaking or lonely or both, and to illustrate the point a large number found work and mateship in the unionised workforce of the railways.

Such a man was John Visokinsky of Tivoli, who worked on the Tivoli line. His only son Czeslaw (Cecil) was a boiler maker's assistant at the Workshops whose accidental drowning at Colledges Crossing in 1913 caused furtive interest and a minor sensation among the public as much for its "Russianness" as for the tragedy itself. On 16 February 1913, seventeen year old Cecil and three Russian friends (Zalobeski and Branswetter, both nippers; and Sokoloff, a student) went to Sokoloff's father's camp on the Tivoli-Mount Crosby tramway where they had dinner and decided to have a swim at Colledges Crossing. They occupied themselves at the river with swimming, cards and rifle shooting before deciding on a second swim. It was during the second swim in the swollen river that Cecil got downstream about fifty yards and disappeared.

On hearing news of the tragedy, John Visokinski went to the river and stayed there for four days until his son was found. Just a few days after that a large contingent of railwaymen attended the funeral of the Russian boy and, in doing what railwaymen are so good at, made clear their impartial sense of loss for their co-worker - just a boy who they knew at the workshops.

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