

# **Geelong & District Insolvency Competition**

**November 2009**

**Insolvent: Joshua VINES**

**Submitted by**

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## Joshua Vines – 1, 2 or 3?

In trying to understand the life of a man named Joshua Vines, I have benefited from the availability of Insolvency records from the Geelong region.

I believe the Joshua I am interested in came to Melbourne in 1852 as an 18 year old, after having grown up around what are now the inner London suburbs of Lambeth, Stepney and Hammersmith.

This Joshua's father, mother and most of his siblings followed him to Melbourne in 1855, with three generations of the family staying close to Melbourne and Geelong over the next one hundred years.

Joshua Vines has come to my attention because of an interest I have in anything to do with the township of Ocean Grove.

A Joshua Vines bought land between The Parade and The Avenue, near Presidents Avenue at Ocean Grove in 1890. A publication called *Historic Ocean Grove: a walking tour, volume one*, page 15 suggests that the land was used as a Livery Stable by the Western Stage Company. This company was at times owned or operated by a Joshua Vines and was later associated with Cobb & Co. Built just across the road from the newly constructed Ocean Grove Coffee Palace, it would be vitally important infrastructure for the transportation of visitors to and from this developing tourist resort.

Vines is not a common name, but my search is confused by there being three Joshua Vines in three generations of the one family. Joshua (1) [1796-1876], Joshua (2) [1834-1906] and Joshua (3) [1864-1927]. At least Joshua (3) had a middle name – he was Joshua Edward Vines, and Joshua (1) having died in 1876, was not the Joshua buying land at Ocean Grove in 1890. It is before 1876 that the lives of the first two Joshua's need untangling.

Two events that need to be understood are the insolvencies of Joshua Vines in 1857 and 1897-1899. The court documents could help resolve the question of which Joshua became insolvent and give us more information on these men's lives. With the chronology of the three Joshua's in mind, a rough guess would be that Joshua (1) was responsible for the 1857 case and possibly Joshua (2) for 1897-1899. By reading the Insolvency records I can correct

these misconceptions brought about by age stereotyping. History benefits from these records because the defendant gets to tell their own story about the lead up to insolvency.

On reading these records I immediately know it was Joshua (2) and not Joshua (1) involved in the 1857 case. Working as a gold broker at Creswick's Creek, a clerk he had employed to help him ran off with the money he had to buy gold. In an effort to transfer some of the blame for this incident, Joshua reveals that he had been underage when it occurred; therefore suggesting his employers had been negligent in putting him in charge of the money. With the information that he turned 21 on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1855, we can assume this is Joshua (2) born in 1834. He also states in 1857 that he is a gold broker and coach proprietor.

The Joshua of the 1897-1899 insolvency is not quite as clear because a birth date / age is not given but I believe it is Joshua (2) as well. One of the pages is signed by Joshua, so it is not Joshua (1) who died in 1876. In the documentation for this case, Joshua Vines is said to reside at 'Latiner' Skene Street, Newtown. The Wise directories of that time list – Joshua Vines, manager, Cobb & Co, Malop Street, Geelong; and J E Vines, manager, Mt Noorat Station, Noorat. So once again the individual we are trying to identify is involved in coaching, as Joshua (2) was. Another clue comes from the PROV's probate records, in Joshua (2)'s will. His executor is his son Joshua Edward Vines of Terang, station manager. Mt Noorat is an area near Terang and the Joshua of the will is of Ballarat, but formerly of Geelong, coach proprietor. So I believe Joshua (2) coach proprietor is the insolvent and his son Joshua (3) is running an agricultural business at Terang.

So with a much greater knowledge of the three Joshua's and their activities, I can look forward to gaining a greater understanding of this family in the future – what an interesting story it could be. Joshua (3) had an article on himself in *The Cyclopedia of Victoria*, vol II, p. 465, which states that he was in "Ballarat at the time of the riots in the camp". Later he is said to have conducted the Duke of York and Royal Party on a coach tour through Western Victoria but it is an article in the *Argus* 26<sup>th</sup> June 1890, p. 7 that I am most interesting in. It tells of a drunken F P Williams regaling people with the stories of his success as a con man in New Zealand, the United States, and going back to Joshua Vines at Creswick.

So with his early years on the gold fields, building up a coaching business, being a Mayor of Newtown and Chilwell and also being insolvent a second time, owing a grand total of around £26,000, I will be going back to find out more about Joshua!