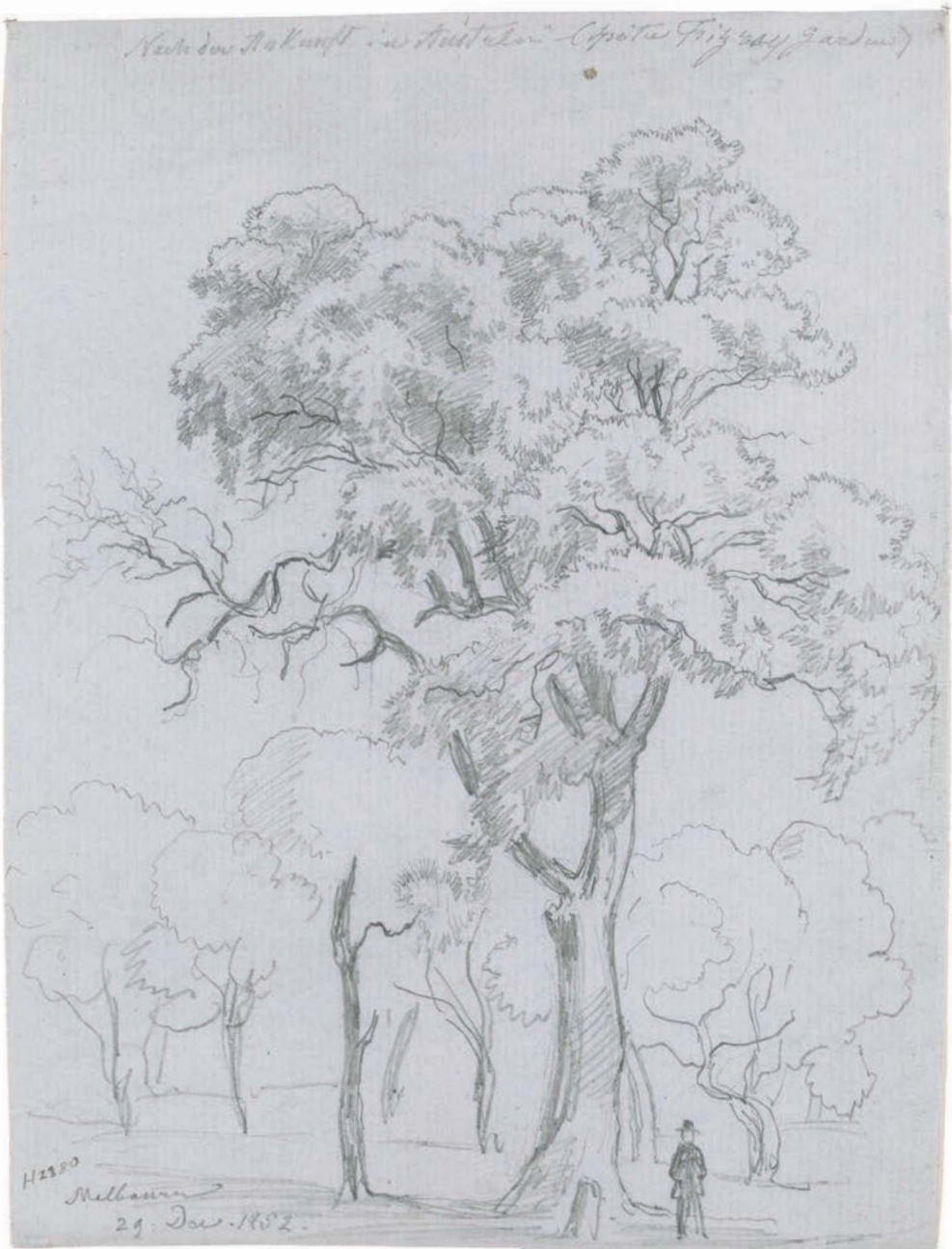




Eugene von Guérard, *Melbourne 29 December 1852*, 1852. Pencil on blue paper. 20.2 x 15.3 cm.
Inscribed 'Melbourne / 29 December 1852/ Nach der Ankunft Australien (Später Fitzroy Gardens).'
State Library of Victoria [H2380]
All following images are by Eugene von Guérard.

Ruth Pullin

Not Lost, Just Hiding: Eugene von Guérard's first Australian sketchbooks

ON HIS FIRST FULL DAY on Australian soil, Wednesday 29 December 1852, the Austrian-born, Italian- and German-trained landscape painter, Eugene von Guérard (1811–1901), sketched a red gum that grew on the then densely treed site of today's Fitzroy Gardens in Melbourne.¹ It is a fresh, relaxed drawing, one that reveals the ease with which the new arrival was able to capture the character of his unfamiliar subject. It speaks of the forty-one year old artist's experience as a close observer of nature and of his enthusiasm to explore and understand his new environment.

The drawing is part of the State Library of Victoria's collection of von Guérard drawings, a collection distinguished by its concentration on the artist's first three years in Australia. It is also a collection with a secret: it holds the keys to the mystery of three of von Guérard's missing sketchbooks. Von Guérard, an ardent draughtsman, recorded his early years in Australia – on the Ballarat goldfields, in Geelong and in Melbourne – in loose drawings and in three small pocket-sized sketchbooks of the type used throughout his career. The books themselves are missing, but some of the pages from them have survived in forty-one small pencil drawings in the State Library of Victoria's collection. The sequential ordering of the drawings reveals a narrative, a narrative hidden for over one hundred years, and it constitutes a rediscovery of the contents of von Guérard's first three 'missing' Australian sketchbooks.

The State Library of Victoria's Collection of von Guérard Drawings

Ninety-five of the one hundred and one drawings by von Guérard held in the State Library of Victoria's collection date from the artist's first three years in the Colony, from late 1852 to early 1856.² The drawings range from pencil sketches on tiny fragments of paper to highly finished pen and ink drawings, watercolour drawings and the great *Panorama of Melbourne*, a pencil drawing on five sheets that is more than three metres wide.³ The Melbourne Public Library (now State Library of Victoria) acquired the drawings as a group in 1903. Defined by the circumscribed period of their creation, their focused subject range and the circumstances of their acquisition, these ninety-five drawings constitute the core of the collection. Five drawings fall outside the 1852–56 time frame and were acquired later.⁴

The coherence of the collection reflects the fact that von Guérard, in effect, curated it himself. Towards the end of his life von Guérard organised the hundreds of loose drawings of Australian subjects in his possession into groupings determined by date, the location of subjects portrayed, and the expeditions on which they were made. Following the artist's death in London on 17 April 1901, his daughter Victoria and her husband

Reginald Blunt consigned the drawings to the London bookseller Francis Edwards. Edwards received them in the twenty-five sets into which the artist had organised them accompanied by von Guérard's handwritten inventory of his sets of drawings, with the dates and descriptive title of each set. Edward A. Petherick, the noted Australian bibliographer employed by Francis Edwards at the time, retained the inventory and it is preserved with his papers.⁵

The ninety-five drawings in the Library's collection are those that comprised the first two sets on von Guérard's list. He listed them as:

1. 1853-1854 Melbourne, Ballarat, Eureka
2. 1852-54-55 Melbourne

Von Guérard's original groupings were generally observed when most, but not all, of the drawings in the other twenty-three sets were bound in albums, albums that are now held in public collections.⁶

Francis Edwards recognized the relevance of the 'Melbourne' sets to the Melbourne Public Library and on 13 July 1901 he wrote to the Chief Librarian, E. L. Armstrong, to advise him that he had 'secured a series of Pencil Drawings of Australian Scenery by Eugene von Guérard'. He introduced them as 'mostly carefully finished pencil drawings of places in the vicinity of, or not far from Melbourne'.⁷ After some unforeen delays, the drawings were sent to Melbourne on approval in September 1902, along with three small oil paintings that were not acquired by the Library.⁸ The drawings were described as:

Panorama of Melbourne
Pencil drawing, 5 sheets
& six other pencil sketch [es]
Ship 'Windermere' at sea
Point Nepean, Ballarat,
Geelong
88 sketches on 54 sheets

On 22 December 1902 Edwards accepted the £30.00 offered for the drawings, though he thought they 'would have been worth the £40.00 asked for them', and on 29 January 1903 they became part of the collection housed in the building in which von Guérard had spent over a decade, from 1870-1881, as the curator of the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria.¹⁰

The '54 sheets' on which eighty-eight of the drawings were mounted were, as Petherick's notes record, 'mostly of foolscap size'.¹¹ The drawings are now individually mounted and the original sheets unfortunately no longer exist. Nineteen of the ninety-five drawings relate to von Guérard's journeys to Australia and then to Ballarat (October 1852 – January 1853); fifty to his time on the Ballarat goldfields and the surrounding area (January 1853-February 1854); seventeen to his stay in the Geelong region (Feb – April 1854) and nine to his early days in Melbourne (late 1854, 1855 and early 1856). There are connections in date and subject between this last group, the nine Melbourne

drawings and von Guérard's *Victorian Sketches*, an album made up from the fifth and sixth sets of drawings on von Guérard's inventory.¹²

The 'Missing' Sketchbooks and the State Library of Victoria

Von Guérard's practice of using a sketchbook on his travels began in the 1830s and it continued until the last year of his life.¹³ The earliest extant sketchbook was, as his methodical numbering of the books reveals, his third and it dates from 1834 when he and his artist-father Bernard von Guérard were living in Naples. In March of that year they travelled around Sicily together, each recording the journey in their respective sketchbooks and on some occasions sitting side by side to sketch the same subject.¹⁴ In an inscription on the inside back cover von Guérard noted with evident relief that this book was back in his possession after having been lost on the road between Palermo and Alcamo.¹⁵ After the near loss of this one precious book, von Guérard managed to keep his lifetime's production of forty-seven sketchbooks until his death. Carefully catalogued, and their contents methodically dated and documented, the sketchbooks had deep personal significance for him as visual – and written – diaries of the travels that defined his career. They were the foundation of his professional practice, a repository of observations, studies and compositional drawings made on expeditions for use in the studio.

Thirty-five of the forty-seven sketchbooks that von Guérard produced over his lifetime are extant, thirty-three of them held by the State Library of New South Wales and two in a private collection in the United Kingdom. Von Guérard's sequential numbering system makes it possible to identify those that are missing. Five of the eleven Italian books survive, four of the seven German books, and eighteen of the twenty-two Australian books. Seven books and a notebook were produced in England, in the last decade of the artist's life.¹⁶ One of the four missing Australian sketchbooks, number XXXVII, dates from between 1869 and 1876. The other three, numbers XIX, XX and XXI, preceded the first extant Australian sketchbook: inscribed *N. XXII / N. 4 Australien*, it was his twenty-second book overall and the fourth used in Australia. The three preceding sketchbooks, von Guérard's first Australian sketchbooks, are among those that have not been located.

The period encompassed by von Guérard's first three Australian books is demarcated by his journey to Australia and the commencement of the fourth Australian sketchbook, between August 1852 and April 1854.¹⁷ The drawings in the Library's collection fit this time frame precisely and they record the events of that period – the journey to Australia, then to the Ballarat goldfields and the thirteen months spent there. Forty-one of them are particularly small, the smallest measuring a mere 2.1 x 7.2 cms. Small scale sheets such as these are not found in any other public collection, nor are they typical of the scale of von Guérard's loose drawings. The drawings are consistent in character with sketches found in von Guérard's surviving sketchbooks in their documentary style, their informality, and the type and placement of inscriptions. The use of both sides of the sheet in some is consistent with their origin as pages from a book. All forty-one drawings

show evidence of having been cut along at least one edge and many have been cut along two or three edges.

Independent evidence that at least two sketchbooks from these years were dismantled and drawings cut from their pages exists in a manuscript, held in the State Library of New South Wales, the 'Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G', also known as 'A pioneer of the fifties: leaves from the journal of an Australian Digger, 18 August 1852-16 March 1854'.¹⁸

'Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G.'

Von Guérard's diary of his journey to Australia and his time on the Ballarat goldfields survives in excerpts translated into English and preserved in a bound typescript manuscript, 'Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G'. The original notes for the diary were written in old German script on the back pages of von Guérard's sketchbooks. The style of the English translation, and that of the introductory and concluding remarks, suggest that a native English speaker, possibly von Guérard's daughter, Victoria, or her literary husband, Reginald Blunt, worked on the project.¹⁹

The 'Journal' contains ten pen and ink drawings by von Guérard, pasted onto the pages that follow the manuscript. The drawings date from 1853 and 1854 and portray aspects of life on the Ballarat goldfields: they illustrate the narrative of the text. The drawings were removed from two of von Guérard's sketchbooks, one a book of blue wove paper pages and the other of cream laid paper. The first is a double page drawing from a sketchbook and the other nine are single pages, each cut from a book along the gutter (internal spine). All but one is dated and all are paginated and inscribed with their subject, as was von Guérard's sketchbook practice. The dates and subjects of the 'Journal' drawings alternate with those on similar papers in the Library's collection, suggesting their common source.

Why von Guérard would sanction the dismemberment of sketchbooks he had kept throughout his long career, books in which his life's journeys were recorded and which, the evidence suggests, he treasured, is unclear.²⁰ These three books were still intact in 1894.²¹ Von Guérard was then living with his daughter and son-in-law, Reginald Blunt, and it may be that Reginald saw the potential of the diary and drawings for a publication on the popular subject of the Australian gold rushes. Blunt was the author/compiler of over forty books, some published and others, like the 'Journal', produced as bound typescripts. The selection of drawings in pen and ink rather than pencil for the 'Journal' may have been made with a publication in mind. It is possible that the production of the 'Journal' postdated von Guérard's death; the more likely scenario, given that the related goldfields drawings in the Library's collection were in Francis Edwards' hands so soon after von Guérard's death, is that this was a project on which the elderly artist collaborated with his daughter and son-in-law in the years between 1894 and 1901.

The Sketchbooks

Sketchbook XIX, 1852-1853, No 1 Australia

Eighteen drawings on fourteen sheets of cream wove paper in the Library's collection constitute a chronological and narrative sequence of von Guérard's journey to Australia and to the goldfields, a sequence typical of a sketchbook. Four sheets have drawings on both the recto and verso and three have text on the verso, again as is typical of von Guérard's sketchbooks. The drawings, on paper stock that is consistent in type and colour, have been cut down from larger sheets, but similarities in their dimensions suggest a common source: nine of the fourteen sheets have an edge that measures between 7.0 and 7.4 cms in height or width (depending on orientation) and seven have an edge that measures between 10.0 and 10.9 cms. The small scale of the drawings in this sequence suggests that the sketchbook itself was small, perhaps similar to the 15.0 x 10.0 cms book that he had used recently in Germany, where it is likely that this book was acquired.²²

The first sketch, dated October 1852, depicts a ship seen on the Atlantic Ocean from the deck of the *Windermere*, no doubt a welcome diversion during the long days at sea.²³ The theme of separation by 'seas, lands and rivers' is explored in the lines of German verse on the verso. The experience of life on the ship's deck is evoked in a study of a sketching companion, Dr Brigoulite, and on the verso, light-hearted vignettes of fellow passengers battling windy conditions on deck; the head of a seabird, cursorily recorded, appears on the back of a sketch of clouds seen over the water.²⁴ A vessel sketched on 17 December, '170 m. f. Melbourne', is, as von Guérard's diary entry for that day confirms, the *Grampian*, which 'approached us to within a few hundred yards'; the diary entries for the 'Journal' were almost certainly recorded on the back pages of this book.²⁵

Von Guérard's first drawing of Australia, taken from the deck of the *Windermere*, captures the exhilarating moment when, at 6 a.m. on the morning of 22 December, he saw the lighthouse at Point Lonsdale at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay – '*The first house I saw in Australia*'. Two drawings of the entrance to Port Phillip Bay followed and then a sketch of Station Peak (the You Yangs), made as the *Windermere* sat at anchor awaiting the local pilot. On 24 December, after a frustrating delay, von Guérard boarded a steamer for Melbourne, making a sketch of the ship that had been his home for the past four and a half months before he left. The sequence resumes on 2 January 1853 when, after a few days in Melbourne, von Guérard reached Geelong where he sketched the Catholic churchyard with Station Peak in the background. By 11 January von Guérard and members of the French party with whom he had sailed from the London port of Gravesend were on their way to Ballarat.

The crucial evidence that the drawings on cream wove paper originated in a sketchbook lies embedded within three of the tiniest – and most enigmatic – of the drawings in this sequence. The sketch on each of these three fragments of paper is a vignette set into lines of notes written in old German script; notes on the verso of each sheet, written as a series of phrases rather than sentences and scored through with



[Point Lonsdale lighthouse at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay], 1852. Pencil on cream paper, 7.2 x 10.8 cm. Inscribed 'Erstes Haus / welches Ich /in Australien sah./ Point Lonsdale / Leuchthaus am / Eingang v. Port Phillip. / 22. Dec. 52 / Morgens 6 Uhr.' State Library of Victoria [H2384]



Windermere at Geelong, 1852. Pencil on cream paper, 7.4 x 10.9 cm. Inscribed 'Windermere auf den Reide [?]v. Geelong. 24. December 1852. Abend (17 1/4 Uhr)'. State Library of Victoria [H3800]

diagonal lines, are identical to the pages of dated entries that survive in two of von Guérard's late Australian sketchbooks.²⁶ The notes in the two later books are similarly illustrated with small vignettes and the text has been scored with lines of ink, suggesting that these epigrammatic notes had served their purpose.²⁷ The three tiny sketches in the Library's collection were cut from such pages of notes with no regard for the text; they are almost certainly the only surviving remnants of the notes on which von Guérard's 'Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G.' is based.

That these three fragments belonged to Sketchbook XIX can be established by a date visible on one of them that survived the scissors: *Fr.* (Freitag = Friday) 14 Janner (14 January).²⁸ The 14th of January was a Friday in 1853 and on that day von Guérard was on the trek from Geelong to Ballarat. This one firm date makes it possible to position the two



[Bullock wagon and figures], [11 January 1853], recto and verso. Pencil on cream paper, 2.2 x 7.4 cm. State Library of Victoria [H2361]

undated fragments in the sequence. In the notes on the back of [*Unidentified Landscape*] the mention of 'unsealed streets', 'many shops', 'several Frenchmen', (also referred to in the 'Journal' entry for 9 January) and a 'French guesthouse' suggest that it was sketched in the Geelong area, and therefore between 30 December 1852 and 11 January 1853.²⁹ The second in the sequence, [*Bullock wagon and figures*], can be linked to the 'Journal' entry for 11 January when von Guérard saw a 'number of two-wheeled waggons [sic] drawn by six, eight or even ten oxen' in the Moorabool Valley just before Batesford.³⁰ The third sketch, [*Buildings or dwellings*], dated Friday 14 January on the verso, is the last in the sequence on cream wove paper. The narrative continues in the next sketchbook with three sketches on blue wove paper dated the same day, 13-14 January.³¹

Sketchbook XX, 1853, No. 2 Australia: the blue book

The thirty-two pages that can be identified as belonging to von Guérard's second Australian sketchbook, Sketchbook XX, make it the most complete of the three.³² It comprises twenty-four pencil drawings on blue wove paper in the Library's collection and eight pen and ink drawings in the 'Journal'. This is the book that von Guérard used on the Ballarat goldfields throughout the year of 1853, the year when the discovery of huge nuggets like the *Sarah Sands* made Ballarat the mecca for fortune seekers from all over the world and the most exciting place on earth to be at that time.³³ As his



[*Catholic Chapel at Brownhill near Eureka*], 1853. Pencil on blue paper, 10.0 x 16.2 cm. Inscribed 'Kath. Kapelle a. Brownill bei Eureka 6 Aug. 53 Chr [...]'. State Library of Victoria [H3819]



Ballarat Flat, 1853. Pencil, pen and ink on blue paper, 10.0 x 15.5 cm. Inscribed 'Ballarat flat 4 Aug. 1853 / Irish hole.' In: 'A Pioneer of the Fifties: Leaves from the Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G.', Dixon Galleries, State Library of New South Wales [DLMS Q41]

'Journal' reveals von Guérard engaged with the experience, despite its hardships, with his characteristic energy and equanimity. In his drawings too – the observations of daily life on the goldfields, the portraits of colleagues, the depictions of the operations of mining and of the camps at the different leads where he and his party established claims and his penetrating responses to the rapidly changing natural environment – von Guérard's inquiring mind and his engagement with the world around him is evident.



[Muddy Water Holes] 1853. Pencil on blue paper, 6.5 x 10.0 cm. Inscribed 'Mouthy Water Houl. Nacht v. 13-14 Januar 1853.' State Library of Victoria [H2390]



Ballarat Diggings 1853. Pencil on blue grey paper, 6.0 x 10.0 cm. Inscribed '26 Januar 1853 [...] Ballarat Diggings 1853.' State Library of Victoria [H2358]



[Australian Palm, Canadian Gully] 1853. Pencil on blue-grey paper, 9.6 x 6.0 cm. Inscribed 'Australische Pinsenpalme / 2-3 bis 4 Fuß hoch / Canadian Gullet. bei Ballarat / 6. Feb. 1853.' State Library of Victoria [H2374]



[Gum trees not far from Canadian Gully] 1853. Pencil on blue-grey paper, 10.0 x 5.8 cm. Inscribed 'Gum trees / not face from [north face from?] Canadian Gullet / 6 Feb. 1853.' State Library of Victoria [H2369]

The eight drawings on blue paper in the 'Journal' are complete single pages that measure, with minor variations, 10.0 x 16.0 cm. The drawings were made on the right hand page of the book and each has been cut from the gutter along its left edge. The paper type, dimensions and thickness of the 'Journal' drawings and those of one of the Library's pencil drawing, *Catholic Chapel at Brownhill near Eureka*, are identical.³⁴ This, and the fact that the Library's drawing, dated 6 August 1853, was executed two days after



[Eureka with Warrenheip Hill in the background] 1853. Pencil on cream paper, 20.0 x 31.2 cm. Inscribed 'Im Hintergrund Warrenheip Hill / Eureka Mitt. 16 u. 17 Nov. 1853.' State Library of Victoria [H12536]

one of the drawings in the 'Journal' (*Ballarat Flat*, 4 August), suggests that the Library's drawing and the drawings on blue paper in the *Journal* came from one sketchbook. The other twenty-three smaller drawings on comparable paper in the Library's collection fit into the chronological and geographical sequence of the 'Journal' drawings. All (with the exception of *Catholic Chapel at Brownhill*) have been cut along two, and sometimes three edges and they measure approximately 10.0 x 6.0 cm, the 10 centimetre edge common to both the Library and the 'Journal' drawings.

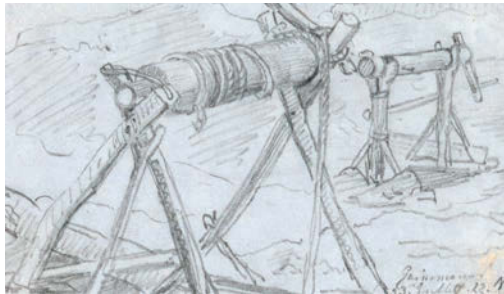
While consistencies in subject and chronology, paper type and size support the case for the 'Journal' and Library drawings having originated in a single sketchbook, some of the evidence is inconclusive. Minor variations were found in the gauge and hue of the papers: the average reading for the paper thickness of the Library's drawings is 0.09 of a micrometre while those from the 'Journal' have a slightly higher reading of between 0.11 and 0.12 of a micrometre. In addition the paper in one sequence of six drawings in the State Library of Victoria's collection is slightly thinner again, 0.08 of a micrometre, and slightly greyer in tonality.³⁵ Such minor inconsistencies may reflect the circumstances of the manufacture of the sketchbooks or the different histories of the drawings, including past conservation treatments.³⁶ In the context of the variation of 0.06 of a micrometre found between the thicknesses of pages in a sketchbook used by von Guérard's teacher, Johann Wilhelm Schirmer (admittedly a heavier velin watercolour paper), the variations of between 0.02 and 0.04 of a micrometre measured in the Library drawings seem to fall

My tent on Blackhill 1853. Pencil, pen and ink, 10.1 x 16.0 cm. Inscribed 'My tent on Blackhill 9ten November 1853 / The Mann [sic] too large.'

In: 'A Pioneer of the Fifties: Leaves from the Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G.', Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales [DLMS Q41]



[Windlass over mine shaft] 1853. Pencil on blue paper, 5.7 x 10.0 cm. Inscribed 'Ghinamans [sic.] / 53 Gulley [sic] 22 Nov.' State Library of Victoria [H2364]



Edmond Armand, Chinamans Gully 1853. Pencil, pen and ink, 10.1 x 15.6 cm. Inscribed 'Edmond Armand / Chinamans Gulley, 23 Nov. In: 'A Pioneer of the Fifties: Leaves from the Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G.', Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales [DLMS Q41]



within an acceptable range for the drawings to have come from the one book.³⁷ These variations may also be explained by the fact that the measurement of paper thickness is mostly restricted to the edge of the sheet where it is more likely that variations will exist; in the case of the Library's drawings the variation may reflect the difference between a sheet that has been cut and one with an original edge.³⁸ Finally, the inscriptions on the small Library drawings – their scale, placement and content – are consistent with the small scale of sketchbook drawings but the absence of page numbers on the Library's drawings – possibly lost in the cutting process – must be noted.



Old Eureka Hill [February 1854]. Pencil, pen and brown ink on cream laid paper, 11.0 x 36.0 cm.
Inscribed *Old Eureka Hill / Red hill flat/ Red hill / Warreneip [sic] Hill.*
In: 'A Pioneer of the Fifties: Leaves from the Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G.', Dixon
Galleries, State Library of New South Wales [DLMS Q41]

Sketchbook XX opens on 13-14 January 1853 when von Guérard was on the 'East Road' to the diggings, the route that took miners through Batesford, Burnt Bridge and Buninyong to Ballarat. Three sketches from this date are catalogued as *Monthly Water Haul*, an early misreading of von Guérard's inscription, *Mouthy Water Houl*. 'Mouthy', the German word for 'muddy', provides the vital clue that, as is typical of von Guérard's drawings, the title is a place name. *Mouthy Water Houl* (the last word misspelt by the recently arrived German speaker) refers to Muddy Water-Holes, the name by which the town of Lethbridge was then known. It was a popular overnight campsite for miners en route to the diggings and von Guérard's diary entries indicate that it is precisely where he would have been on the night of 13-14 January. William Howitt, in 1852, had found little to recommend 'the ominous locality of "The Muddy Water-Holes"', but von Guérard's three sketches, cursory as they are, reveal his fascination with the supine habits of the 'Gummibaum' (gum trees) that grew by the water.³⁹

The journey through Buninyong, Winter's Flat and Yuille's Station was recorded in both the sketchbook and on larger loose sheets of blue paper.⁴⁰ On 26 January, eight days after his arrival at Eureka, von Guérard made his first sketch on the goldfields. It is a depiction of a makeshift windlass, fashioned out of the forked limb of a tree and showing the cumbersome wooden turning mechanism used by desperate diggers when demand made it impossible to acquire metal windlasses. A wealth of information has been captured in what is a comparatively slight sketch, including the detail of tree trunks from which large sections of bark, used as a building material, have been removed.

In the sequence of eight drawings that follow, von Guérard, the landscape painter, turned his attention to the natural environment. A sketch of an [Australische pinsenpalme] [Xanthorrhoea] is the artist's first study of a plant that captured his imagination and which was to feature in many of his Australian oils. The other seven are studies of the gum tree, sketched mostly at Canadian Gully where von Guérard and his party were then working a claim. They are relatively free sketches, their messiness



[*Lagoon two miles behind the camp at Ballarat*] 1853. Pencil on blue paper, 20.4 x 33.0 cm. Inscribed 'An d. rechter Seite d. g. Sümpfes. / Lagune 2. M. hinter d. Camp v. Ballarat / 4 August 1853.' State Library of Victoria [H3812]

perhaps a response to what must have struck the artist as the unruly aspect of these trees. In these observations he began to understand the eucalypt, its forms and habits: in one a fallen limb caught in the fork of a tree has been observed, in others hollows in the tree trunks, and in all the complex and convoluted branch structures of the eucalypt; his differentiation between the stringybark and the candlebark reveals his early ability to discriminate between species. A few months earlier, on the road to Ballarat, he had noted the 'wattle, she-oak, honeysuckle, eucalyptus etc., all quite new to me'.⁴¹ In these sketches he set out to learn the language of the Australian bush. They were followed by more finished, independent drawings in which the eucalypt, the she-oak and the blackwood were portrayed with unsurpassed clarity and precision.

Trees are the dominant subject of forty-six of the von Guérard drawings in the State Library of Victoria's collection and of these thirteen are dedicated tree studies. The significance of the tree in von Guérard's lexicon reflects its place in the European and German Romantic landscape tradition and his connections with that tradition. In, for example, *Eureka with Warrenheip Hill in the background*, the concentrated precision and linear purity of the drawing resonates with a deeply German Romantic, and specifically Nazarene sensibility.⁴² Rather than precluding his ability to observe nature truthfully, as is often suggested, von Guérard's German and Nazarene way of seeing intensified his penetrating and faithful response to nature. As Ludwig Richter (1803-1884), an associate of the Nazarenes who had been in Rome shortly before von Guérard's arrival in 1830,



[View from the Bald Hills towards the mountains and Lakes Learmonth and Burrumbeet], 13 August 1853. Pencil on three sheets, 1 cream paper sheet and 2 blue paper sheets, 19.5 x 93.4 (complete). State Library of Victoria [H1593]

observed, 'Our pencils would never be hard enough or finely enough pointed for drawing firm, precise outlines, down to the smallest detail . . . we fell in love with every blade of grass, every graceful twig.'⁴³

Following long breaks between April and July and from late August to October 1853, during which von Guérard was focused on the task of mining, there was a burst of drawing activity in November with a run of twelve sketchbook drawings found alternately in the 'Journal' and the Library collection. Three drawings in the 'Journal', dated 9, 11 and 17 November, *My tent on Blackhill*, *Black Swamp* and *Chinamans* [sic] [Gully], are followed by three Library drawings of 21 and 22 November *Ed Armand*, *Eureka* and *Chinamans Gully* and *Chinamans* [Gully].⁴⁴ Four drawings in the 'Journal' executed on 23 November, and all titled *Chinamans Gully*, are followed by two sketches made at Chinaman's Gully on the following day, 24 November, now in the Library's collection.⁴⁵ The 'November' drawings in the 'Journal' and the Library's collection are linked chronologically and by subject and location: they are mainly depictions of the various aspects of mining and nine were sketched at Chinaman's Gully.

The inscription on the last sketch from Sketchbook XX, *Geelong nach Melbourne* (with the You Yangs visible in the distance), places it in April 1854 when von Guérard was heading to Melbourne. By this time von Guérard had already begun to use his fourth Australian book, Sketchbook XXII, a book purchased from Mercer's in Geelong and the first of his extant Australian sketchbooks.⁴⁶



Sketchbook XXI, 1853, 1854, No. 3 Australia

While only three drawings, two in the 'Journal' and one in the Library's collection, can be identified with Sketchbook XXI, these three drawings contain enough information for the properties of the book and its position in the sequence to be established.

The first drawing in the 'Journal', *Old Eureka Hill*, is a view of the diggings looking across Red Hill Flat towards Mt Warrenheip. The drawing is on the double page of a sketchbook, a page removed, intact, from the centre of a book; the book's size can be determined from the dimensions of the drawing, 11.0 x 36 cm. The pen and ink drawings is on cream laid paper, the vertical lines of the wire frame on which the paper was dried clearly visible. Uncharacteristically it is not dated but an early 1854 date can be proposed on the basis of the last drawing in the 'Journal'. It too is a pen and ink drawing on cream laid paper; its dimensions, 11.0 x 17.9 cm, are those of a single page drawing from the same book. The depiction of the interior of the canvas-roofed church, St Alipius, is dated 19 February 1854, a date that links it with a drawing in the Library's collection, *Blackhill*, 15 February 1854, of similar dimensions (11.0 x 17.3 cm) and also on cream laid paper. On the basis of these three drawings the size of the book, 11.2 x 18.2 cm, the paper type (cream laid), the period when it was used (early 1854), and its place in the sequence (the third of the Australian books) can be established. The book was produced at a time when the artist was particularly active. With his departure from the goldfields imminent it seems he set out to capture the remarkable world of the diggings in his drawings.

The Sketchbook Drawings in the Context of the Library's Collection

The identification of forty-one small sketches in the Library's collection as constituent elements of three Australian sketchbooks fills a critical gap in the sequence of sketchbooks that span von Guérard's long and geographically diverse career. Thirty-eight of the artist's forty-seven sketchbooks can now be identified and the contents of the critical first Australian books known. The sketchbook drawings are at the heart of the Library's collection of von Guérard drawings and like the kernel of a larger truth they encapsulate the significance of the larger collection: it is a collection that marks the pivotal point between his well-established European career and his new career in Australia.⁴⁷ The freshness and wonder of the artist's perception of his new environment is captured in these first Australian drawings while, at the same time, they reveal the sophisticated eye of an experienced, highly-trained and widely-travelled artist. This is a seminal collection, one in which the artist, who only a few years later was to be recognized as 'decidedly the landscape painter of Australia', began to understand the Australian landscape and to establish a visual language for it.

The impact of the new environment and the freshness and fidelity with which von Guérard observed it, together with a sense of how these early drawings informed his later career, is evident in many drawings in the Library's collection. Two examples must suffice here: in his sensitive pencil study, *Lagune 2 M. hinter d. Camp v. Ballarat* [Lake Wendouree] sketched on 4 August 1853 the Humboldtian artist portrayed the shallow reedy swamp, the eucalypts growing at the water's edge and the debris of broken twigs and branches as part of an integrated ecosystem. In this it anticipates works such as *Tower Hill* 1855 and *Mount William and part of the Grampians in West Victoria* 1865; the broken tree trunk and stump depicted in the foreground became a recurrent motif in von Guérard's later Australian paintings and drawings. Similarly, in the Library's panoramic drawing, *View from the Bald Hills towards the mountains and Lakes Learmonth and Burrumbeet*, the impact of the vastness and breadth of the new landscape was registered for the first time. To accommodate the 'grand' view from the top of the Bald Hills, seen on a walk from the goldfields on Saturday 13 August, 1853, von Guérard linked three sheets of paper together to create a drawing that measures 19.4 x 93.5 cm. It was a strategy that he developed in his 'continuous' drawings, drawings that run over multiple pages in his Australian sketchbooks. The panoramic sensibility that informed his subsequent practice in Australia was most fully realised in a *tour de force* of draughtsmanship in the Library's collection, his 360-degree *Panorama of Melbourne*, 1855.⁴⁸

Von Guérard's first Australian drawing, of a gum tree in Melbourne's Fitzroy Gardens, marks the beginning of the artist's study of the eucalypt, a study that can be traced in the Library's collection. It culminates in a spectacular drawing executed in 1855 when von Guérard had returned to Melbourne ready to embark upon his career as a landscape painter in Australia in earnest. *Bei Melbourne* (Near Melbourne) is a pencil drawing of a majestic red gum that grew on the flats known as the Police Paddocks, near Richmond, the site of today's Melbourne Cricket Ground. Acutely observed,

rendered in fine detail and with absolute precision, the form of the tree has a powerful spatial presence on the page. It is drawn with conviction and energy, the rhythmic lines describing the bark on its trunk expressive of the life force of this tree. 'If the work has soul in it, it will never be found wanting', the German landscape painter, theorist and scientist Carl Gustav Carus had written in his *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting*.⁴⁹

In this drawing von Guérard's understanding of, immersion in, and love for his subject was expressed in every line and every touch of the pencil on paper. Von Guérard's practice in Australia had its genesis in the drawings in the State Library of Victoria's collection, the collection that holds the keys to his first three Australian sketchbooks. Like the sketchbook recovered from the road between Palermo and Alcamo, these drawings can now take their place with sketchbooks so treasured by the artist throughout his lifetime.



Near Melbourne 1855. Pencil on pale grey paper, 27.0 x 34.4 cm. Inscribed *Near Melbourne* / 14-15 Feb. 55. State Library of Victoria [H3811]