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THE CORNISH IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA:  
THEIR INFLUENCE AND EXPERIENCE  
FROM IMMIGRATION TO ASSIMILATION,  
1836-1936.

A thesis presented for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy.

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SUMMARY

Nineteenth-century Cornwall was in many ways a "land apart", but for several reasons experienced widespread emigration, many of the Cornish migrants settling in South Australia after the foundation of the colony in 1836. The majority were miners and thus their influence was evident at every level in the South Australian mining industry. But despite the abundance of copper, gold was lacking in the colony and so the rushes to Victoria and elsewhere after 1851 drew away many Cousin Jacks. Most returned, however, and it was also true that not all Cornish immigrants were involved exclusively in mining, for a large number participated in the expansion of the South Australian agricultural frontier throughout the last century. As a social phenomenon, immigration from Cornwall was especially significant - the effect of "distance" upon both the settlers and those left behind, the nature of Cornish geographic and social mobility, the social conditions created in the South Australian mining towns, and the transplantation and development of Cornish cultural patterns. The evolution of Cornish culture was most especially noticeable in the mining districts, the Cornish influence extending to the establishment of Methodism (especially the Bible Christian denomination) and the growth of Trade Unionism and the political Labor movement. In the 1880s, after the closure of the mines at Kapunda and Burra Burra and at a time of economic stagnation on the Yorke Peninsula copperfields, many Cornish miners crossed the New South Wales border to work the Barrier and Broken Hill silver mines, while a decade later still others made an important contribution to the development of the Western Australian goldfields. In the early twentieth-century the Yorke Peninsula mines experienced a new era of prosperity, but in the

period 1900 to 1936 South Australia's Cornish community was progressively assimilated into the mainstream of the State's life, there being a number of powerful assimilatory agents at work, with the passage of time acting as the catalyst. Not surprisingly, assimilation occurred more easily in the non-mining areas, while northern Yorke Peninsula clung with greater tenacity to its own individual identity.