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9th Sep 1863

PROCEEDINGS of Inquest held

upon the body of

John Murphy  
William Murphy  
Elizabeth Murphy  
and at Michael James Murphy  
of Leeward Station

Received at Crown Law Offices,

14 February 1863

9. 126

J. Taylor  
Coroner.

PROCEEDINGS BEFORE CORONERS.

INQUISITION.

Victoria }  
TO WIT. }

AN Inquisition for our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, taken at Geefield  
Station in  
the Colony of Victoria aforesaid,  
the ninth day of February A.D. 1863, in  
the twenty sixth year of the Reign of our said Lady the Queen,  
before me James Grant Taylor

\* City, Town, County, or District,  
as the case may be.

Gentleman, a Coroner of our Lady the Queen for the \* district of  
Ararat in the colony aforesaid, upon the  
view of the body of John } Murphy  
William }  
Elizabeth }  
Michael James }  
and there lying dead, upon the oaths of †

† Jurors' Christian and Surnames  
in full.

- Patrick Fogarty Foreman
- Donald Mc Donald
- David Austin
- Michael Maloney
- Henry Underwood
- Mark Ewen
- Morris Hannen
- William Leaning
- John Ferguson
- James Costello
- Henry Ford
- John De Lucy

good and lawful men of Geefield in the  
said Colony who being duly sworn and charged to  
inquire, upon the part of our Lady the Queen, when, where, how, and by what means the  
said John, William, Elizabeth & Michael James Murphy came  
by † their death, do say upon their oath that §

† His or her.  
§ Here state cause of death, if  
known; if unknown, doubtful,  
or no evidence, state the fact  
accordingly, using the words of  
the Verdict of the Jury.  
It is desirable that the Jury should  
find expressly, whether there are  
or are not marks of external  
violence on the body of deceased.

the four children  
were burnt to death by the conflagration  
of the hut in which they slept but that

how the fire originated there is  
no evidence to shew and that  
no blame can be attached to  
any person

In witness whereof as well the aforesaid Coroner as the Jurors aforesaid, have to  
this Inquisition put their hands and seals, on the day and year, and at the place above  
mentioned.

*J. G. May Jr. Esq.* (L.S.)  
Coroner.

\* Here let each Juror sign his own  
name, or make his own mark,  
and affix or acknowledge his  
seal.

*Patrick Fogarty Foreman* (L.S.)

*Donald McDonald* (L.S.)

*D. Austin* (L.S.)

*Michel Moloney* (L.S.)

*Henry MacQuinn* (L.S.)

*Mark Ewen* (L.S.)

*Marrice + Haumen* (L.S.)

*William Leeing* (L.S.)

*John Ferguson* (L.S.)

*James Costelloe* (L.S.)

*Henry Todd* (L.S.)

*John De Leary* (L.S.)

Catherine Murphy on her oath says I am  
 Wife of Michael Murphy a shepherd  
 in the employ of Hugh <sup>McDonald</sup> ~~Conroy~~ Squatter  
 I left our hut about 6 1/2 o'clock in the morning  
 the hut is about 3 miles from the Station  
 I had 2 of the Children sleeping with me &  
~~three in bed + one~~  
~~two~~ one in another. I saw the my eldest  
 boy John I told him to sleep the little  
 girl he said he was very sleepy &  
 I did not like to take him up & I  
 left them. previous to leaving I put  
 one log of wood on the fire & left the  
 kettle with the tea near the fire for the  
 Children. I put one match on the table  
 in the middle of some pins. When I  
 left the fire was not bright & the log I  
 put on was damp. I pulled the  
 door to when I left but did not fasten  
 it. The two beds were close to each  
 other when my husband got up he  
 put one of the Children in his place  
 There was no one near the place  
 when I left. My husband never left  
 matches about he was very careful.

Taken & sworn at Sheffield  
 this 9 February 1863  
 Before me.

her  
 Catherine Murphy  
 mark. *Michael McDonald*

J. J. Lapham  
 Coroner

James McDonald in his oath said  
I rode at Gledfield Station  
about 1/2 past 8 this morning I was  
told that smoke was seen in the  
direction of Murphy's hut I went  
out there immediately on horseback  
I found on arriving that the hut was  
burning nearly all fallen in  
I could see nothing of the children &  
thought that they had gone to their  
father on the pun. I went in  
search of him & found him about  
1/2 mile from the hut the hut was  
not visible from where I found him  
I whistled to him & he got up  
from a tree I asked him if he  
had seen any thing of the children  
He said he had not I told him then  
the hut was burnt & that his wife  
was at the home station & that I  
could see nothing of the children  
about He said perhaps they are  
burnt with the hut. I said that  
perhaps they had got to the home  
station by a different way & that  
by which I had come out. We  
were moving during this conversation  
in the direction of the hut I then  
left him & went to Austin's hut  
1/2 a mile from Murphy's hut  
thinking the children might have  
gone there they had not been seen  
there I came back to Murphy's  
hut. Murphy was about 600 yards

from the hut coming towards it  
I went close up to the hut found the fire  
had gone down & I saw what I fancied  
to be the remains of the Children  
I inquired to Murphy who was then close  
to the hut & tried to persuade him to go  
to the Home Station that he might not  
see them. He came up to the hut then &  
said there's my Children Murphy &  
I then got the remains out with sticks  
put them into a bag. Murphy carried  
them a short distance about 400 Yards  
then he took the more road in to the  
Home Station. I remained with the  
remains till a Spring Cart arrived &  
I put them into the Cart and ~~soon~~  
they were brought to the Home Station  
I found the remains all together on  
the spot where it has been described  
that the beds stood.

Witness

I could discern the smoke of the hut  
before leaving here. but the hut I  
could not see till within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of  
it. I found the heads of 2 together & one lower  
down. together at a small distance

Taken & sworn at Redfield

This 9<sup>th</sup> February 1863

Before me

James Macdonald

J. Macdonald  
Coroner

Catherine Murphy recalled said  
My eldest child was John 9 years  
12 Sept. last. The second was William  
6. on 25 Oct. last. Elizabeth the 3<sup>d</sup> was  
4. on 22 Nov. last. The youngest Michael  
James was 2. on 1<sup>st</sup> January last.

Taken & sworn at Providence Catherine X Murphy  
this 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1863  
Mant

Before me  
J. M. Taylor Juv.  
Coroner

Witness Frederick

Jonah Willy on his oath says  
I am <sup>legally</sup> a qualified Medical  
Practitioner

I examined the remains produced  
here to day & find they consist of the  
principal portions of the remains of  
4 human bodies of children <sup>near</sup> destroyed  
by the action of fire. I can only judge  
from appearance that the fire must  
have been amazingly fierce to have  
destroyed them whilst in a state of  
invisibility.

From the position of a portion of the  
bone I found lying on the ground  
I consider that they were burnt in  
their beds.

Taken & sworn at Redfield }  
this 9 February 1863 } Jonah Willey  
Before me }

A. S. Taylor, M.D.  
Coroner

John Cameron on his oath says  
I saw Bullock driver on Gledfield Station  
This morning I was out bringing in some  
horses about 8 o'clock I saw smoke  
in the direction of Murphy's hut.  
& came home & told Mr McDonald  
immediately. There was not much  
smoke  
The hut was a slab hut.

Taken & sworn at Gledfield  
this 9<sup>th</sup> February 1863  
Before me

John Cameron  
Witness

J. Murphy, P.M.  
J. Cameron

Witness  
Fred. Chol. J. P.