

THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT

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Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, 1816-1878

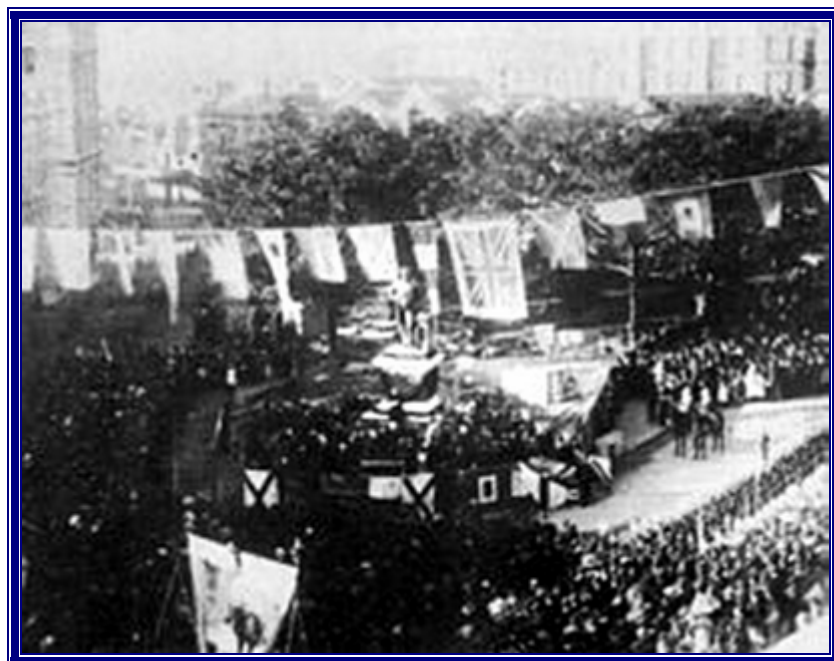
Thomas Mort was born on 23 December, 1816, at Bolton in Lancashire, England and brought up in Manchester where he received a sound and practical education as the second son of Jonathan Mort. On the death of his father, he and his elder brother William, both clerks, struggled financially. However, when Thomas was offered a position in Australia he seized the opportunity, arriving in Sydney on the ship *Superb* in February 1838.

Mort became a clerk, gaining extensive experience in local and international commerce. He married in 1841. In September 1843, he set up as an auctioneer in general and wool sales. He prospered by specialising in sales of wool alone, but went on to auction both livestock and property, providing finances and expenses to purchasers. In the 1850's, he arranged for farmers to consign wool through him for sale in London. He became associated with a number of businesses and became Sydney's leading auctioneer. He also opened a dry dock at Waterview Bay. Mort's wealth multiplied several times over in the 1850's and he was particularly successful in land speculation, eventually owning 38,000 acres. After a visit to England in 1857-1859, he went into farming in a big way and became involved with the mining of copper and coal, and improved his dock facilities where he had interests in a company assembling imported railway locomotives.

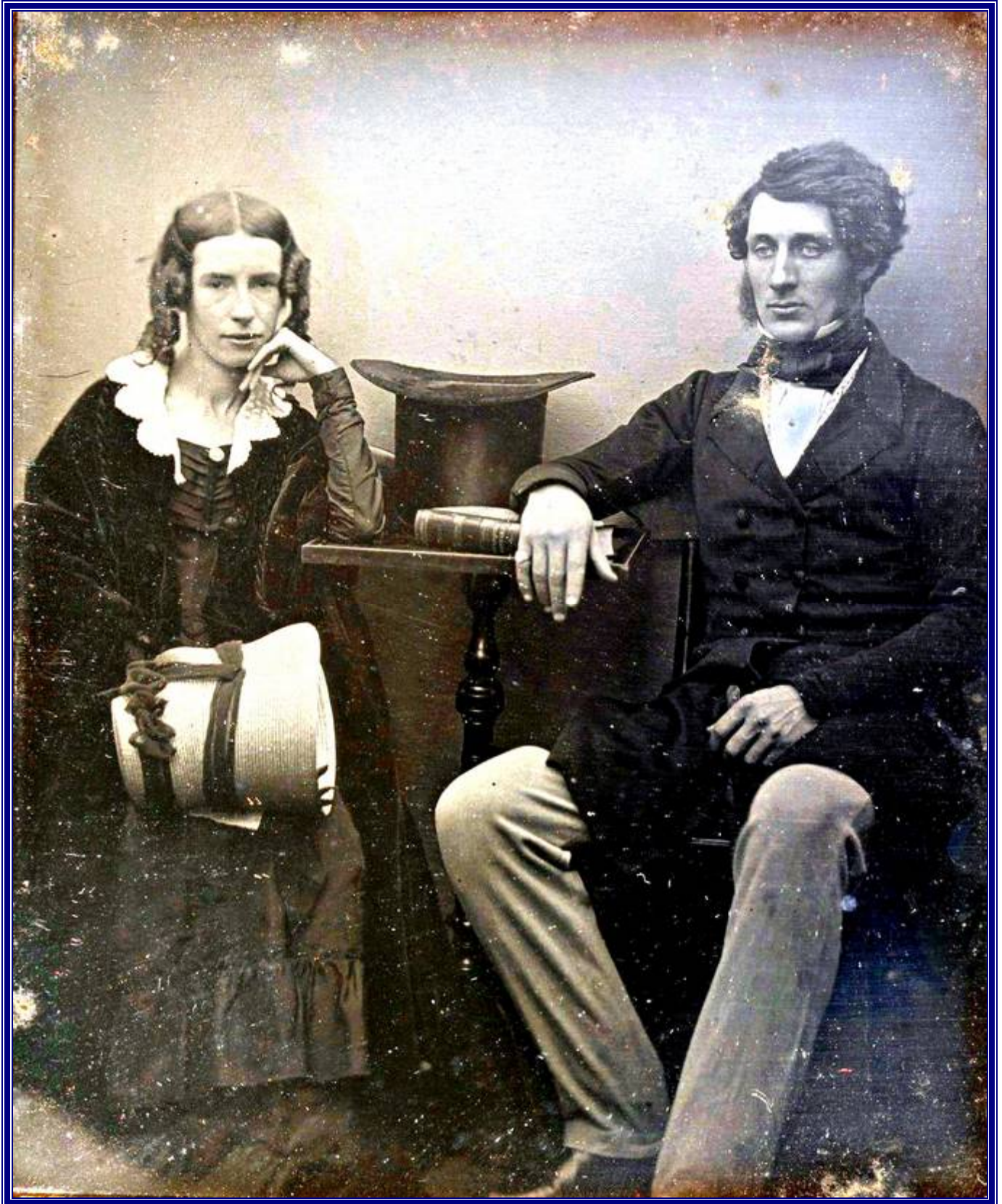
Mort was an entrepreneur not an engineer, but in the mid-1860's he realised the enormous potential in refrigeration for the storing and transportation of meat, butter and milk. From 1866 until 1878, he financed experiments by the French engineer Eugene Dominique Nicolle to design and produce refrigerating machinery suitable for use in ships, trains and cold-storage depots. Although their machinery was never used for shipping frozen meat, Mort and Nicolle developed commercially viable systems for the New South Wales Fresh Food and Ice Company formed in 1875. These were used in "a slaughtering and chilling works at Bowenfels in the Blue Mountains, a cold store at Darling Harbour, milk depots in the Southern Tablelands, and refrigerated railway vans for meat and milk." It has been reported that Mort spent over £100,000 on these projects, his returns being negligible.

He viewed these investments as a community service and it was by the community that he was appreciated. He died on 9 May 1878 from pneumonia at Bodella where he was buried. At the time of his death he was spoken of as "the greatest benefactor the working classes in this country ever had."

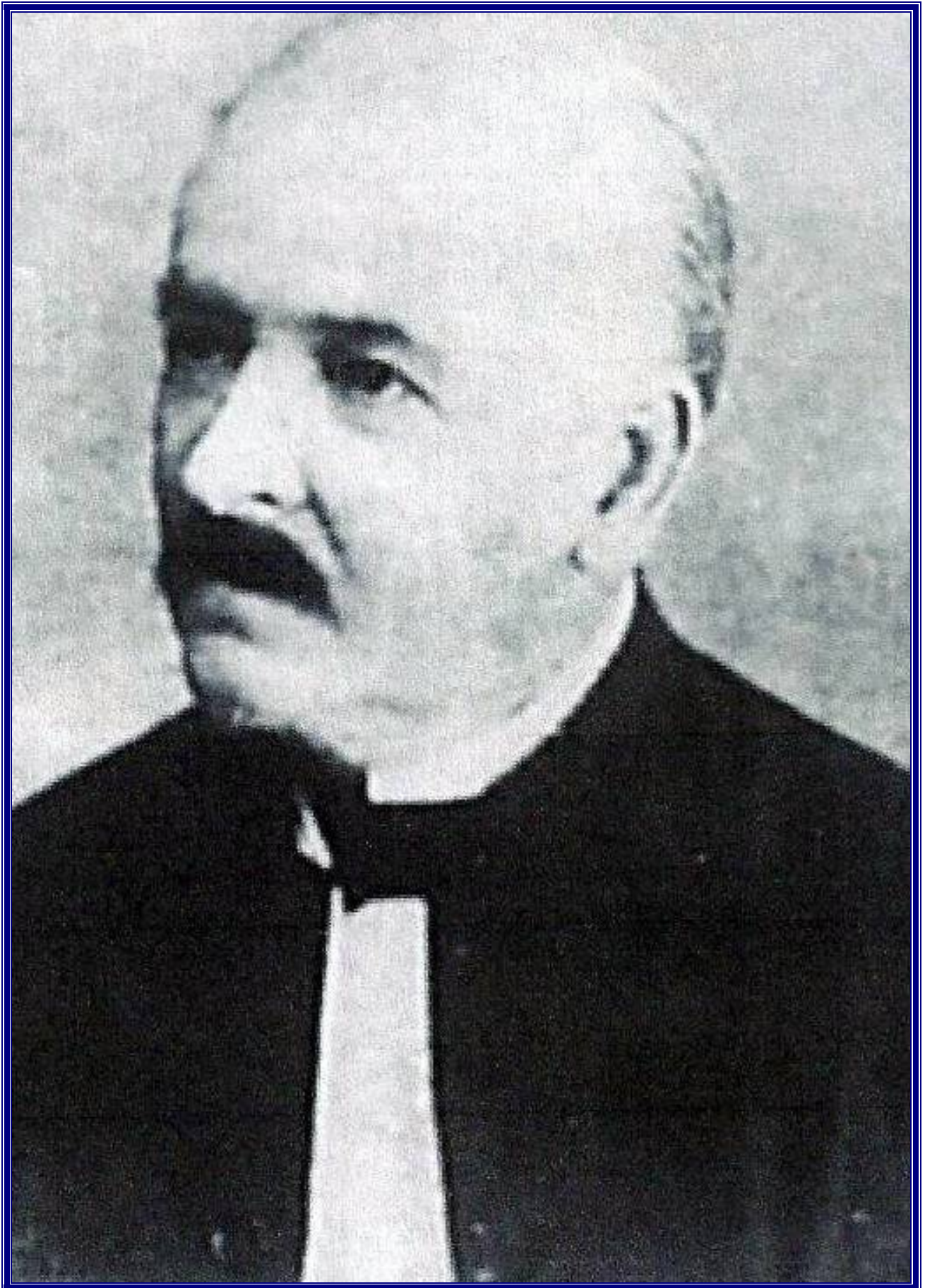
"On 14 May, a meeting of working men in Sydney resolved to show the esteem and respect in which they held his memory, as a result his statue, sculpted by Pierce Connolly, stands in Macquarie Place" (in Sydney).



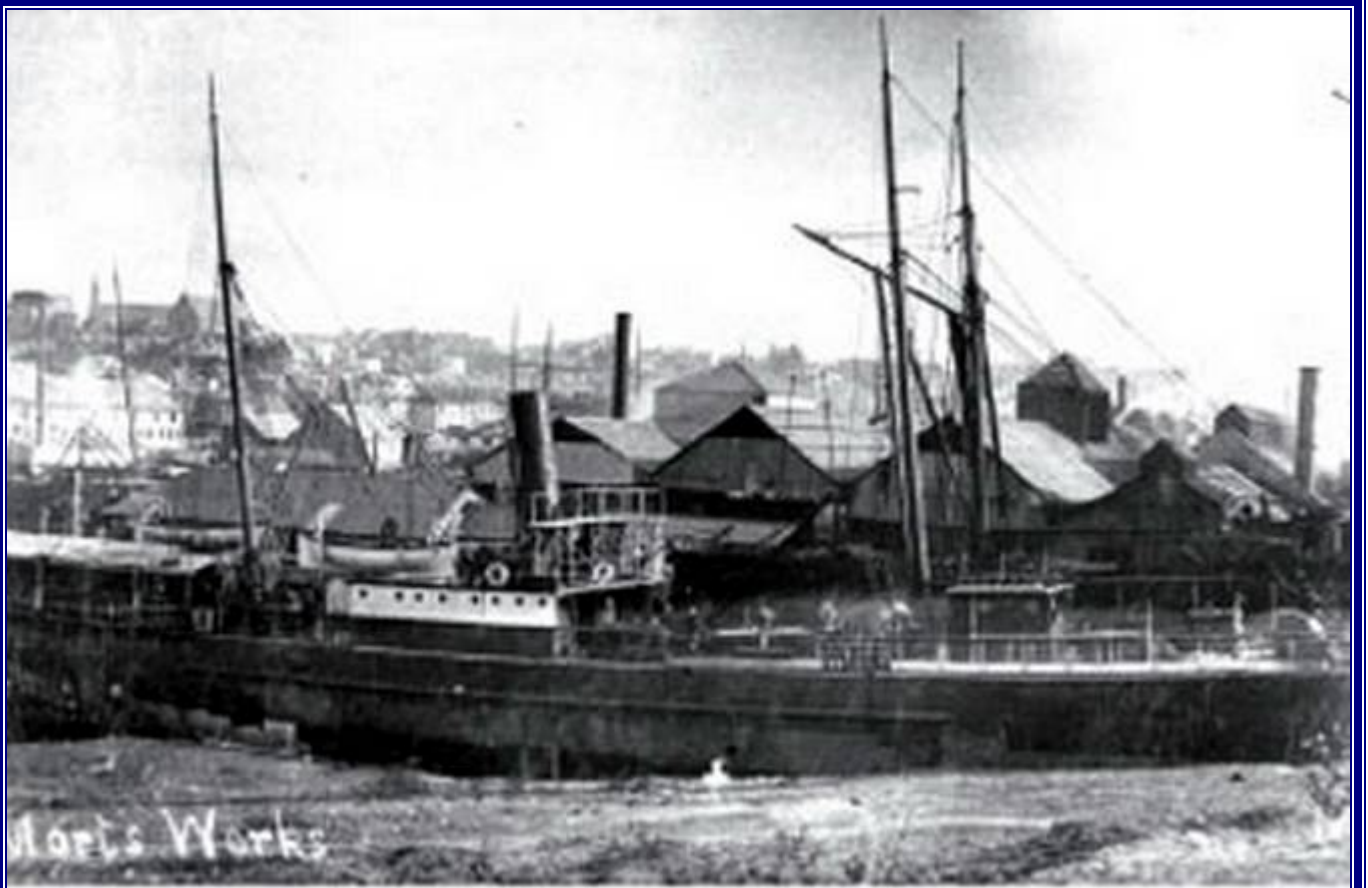
The unveiling of Mort's Statue, 1883



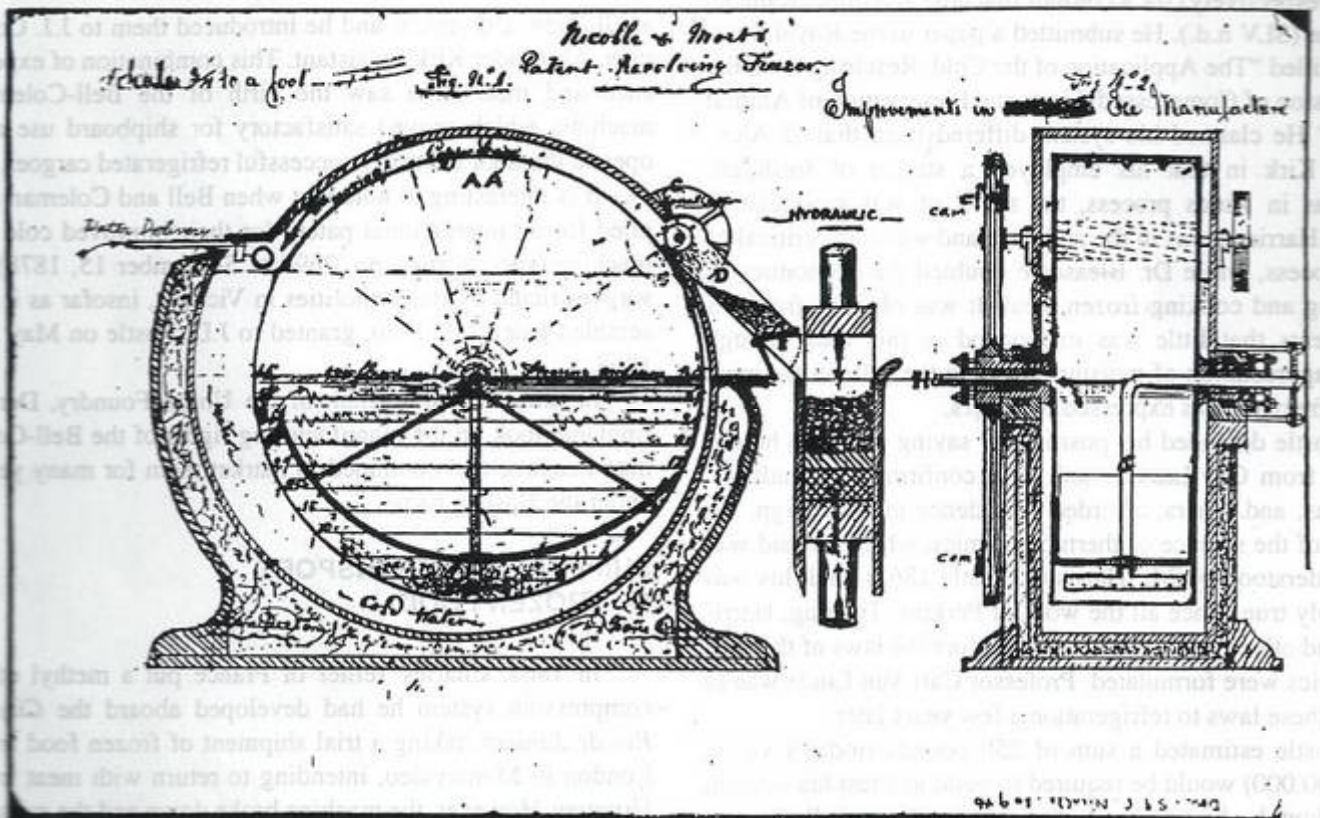
Mr and Mrs Thomas Mort



Eugene Dominique Nicolle, 1823-1909



Mort's Dock c. 1887 showing a steam ship at the wharf and a sailing ship in the dry dock. [Photo: NSW Government Printing Office, held at State Library of NSW]



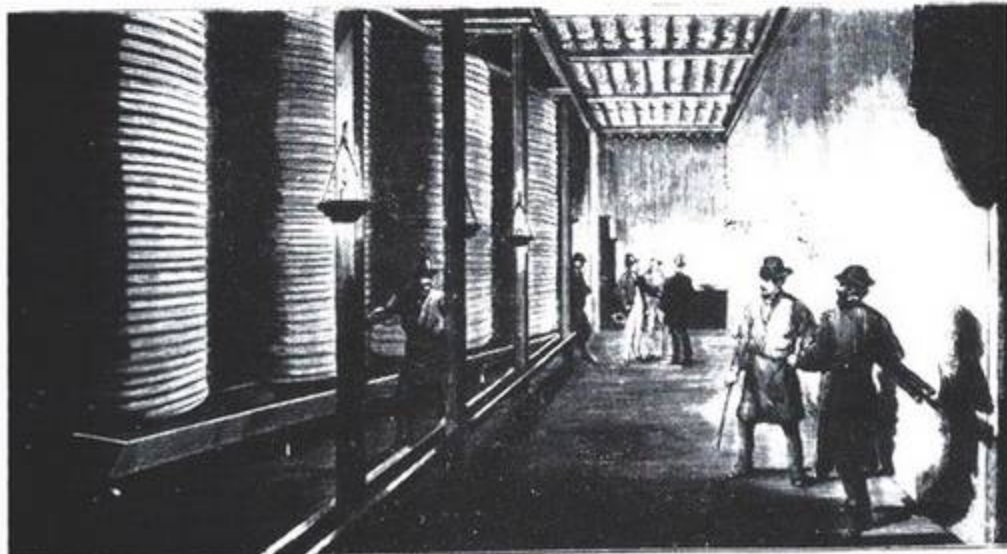
Nicolle and Mort's Revolving Freezer



THE ICE-MAKING ROOM.



THE COLD AND FREEZING ROOM.



MILK-PRESERVING ROOM.

Mort's Freezing Works at Darling Harbour began operating in 1875
From the top: The Ice-Making Room, the Cold & Freezing Room, and the Milk Preserving Room
(From *Illustrated Sydney News*, 27 May, 1876)

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50 Years of the Journal

The REFRIGERATION Journal



Official Journal of THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF REFRIGERATION (INC.)

INSCRIPTION ON THE
BRONZE PLATE, WHICH IS
IN COMMON BLOCK
LETTERING, READS:

THOMAS SUTCLIFFE MORT.
Born England . . . 1816
Arrived Australia . . . 1837
Died Australia . . . 1878

A pioneer of Australian
resources.

A Founder of Australian
Industry.

One who established our
Wool Market.

The first to make export
of perishable foods possible
by refrigeration and to pro-
vide docks for the reception
of the world's shipping.

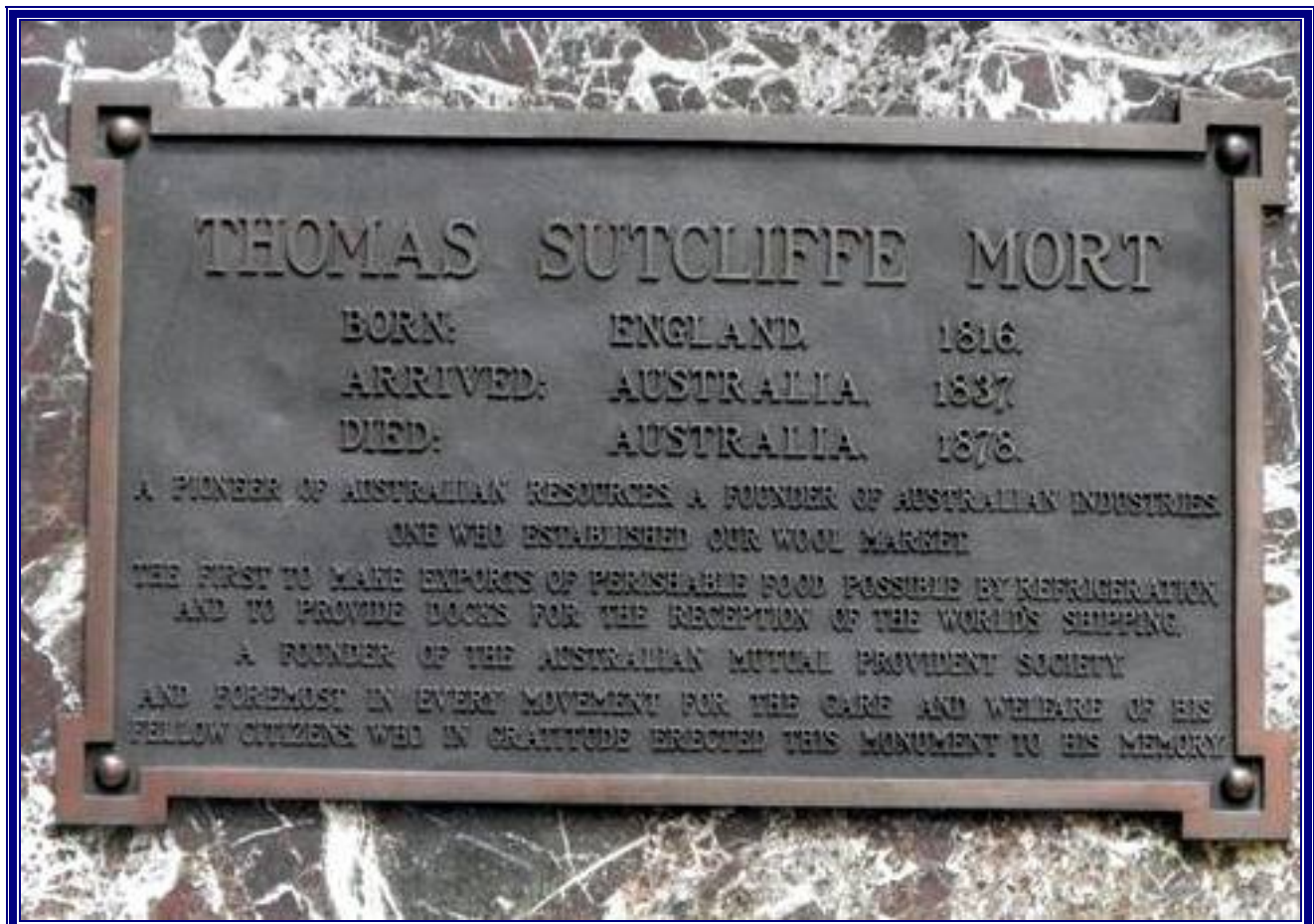
A Founder of the Aus-
tralian Mutual Provident
Society and foremost in
every movement for the
care and welfare of his
fellow citizens who, in grati-
tude, erected this Monument
to his memory.



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Appendix: Eugene Dominique Nicolle



Nicolle and his family

Nicolle was born in 1823 in Rouen, France, arriving in Australia in 1853. He registered, with his partner Richard Dawson, his first ice-making patent in 1861. The next year, Nicolle, Dawson and the Wilkinson brothers bought the Sydney Ice Company from James Harrison and Peter Russell with the franchise to use Harrison's machine in New South Wales. This was to eliminate competition with his ammonia absorption machine. He tried unsuccessfully to raise finance for its use on ships, but in 1866 he teamed up with Thomas Mort to establish the successful adoption of refrigeration in the food industry. Nicolle died on 23 November, 1909.

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