

# (History of the Salvation Army) Sweeping Through the Land

by H. Scotney

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*The Salvation Army grew rapidly in Australia and New Zealand in the late 19th century, facing opposition from publicans and local authorities but thriving on the courage and tenacity of its early members.*

**Duration:** 50:25

**Scripture:** Exodus 14:31, Numbers 23:23, Psalm 126:5, Matthew 5:10, Mark 16:15, Acts 5:41, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

**Topics:** "Salvation Army"

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## Description

The video discusses the early efforts of the Salvation Army in using film and visual education for evangelism. It mentions the production of a full-length feature film in Paris, which was considered pioneering in the field of visual education. However, some experts dispute the claim that it was the first full-length film. The video also mentions the Salvation Army's involvement in the 'Darkest England' scheme and the use of magic lanterns and slides for evangelistic purposes.

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## Transcript

Well now last night we were thinking of the most amazing things that took place in 1880 with spontaneous beginnings of Salvation Army patent activity in four of the Australian cities, out of which came the official beginning in Adelaide and we took a brief glance at the official openings in each of those cities so that by the end of 1882 the army was well established in Adelaide, only just established in Melbourne and Sydney and had a very tenuous toehold in Brisbane and that brings us to 1883 which I've called the Year of Wonders and I hope I can convey to you tonight something of the thrilling excitement of that particular year, 1883, the army swept over southeastern Australia and right across the New Zealand almost like a bushfire. Look first of all at Victoria, without going into a great deal of detail I've tried to summarise the main events. During the year 12 corps were opened, some in Melbourne but including Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong.

33 officers and 10 cadets were reported at the end of that first year, many of them, most of them indeed, locally raised. In June 1883, halfway through that year, the headquarters were secured in South Melbourne which included a hall to seat 1500 people, a training home to accommodate 20 men cadets, also printing, trade and architectural and tailoring departments. The war cry commenced publication on the 16th of June and rose to a circulation of 33,000 copies per week.

Permission was given for officers to visit prisons, to conduct meetings and interview prisoners and quite an established work was operating in that year. I have here an historic little book which is called The Victorian Salvation War in 1883 and it's really thrilling to read here the stories of conversion, the exciting events that took place particularly in Victoria in the year 1883. The editor of this journal said that he had hoped to include the history of the other colonies as they were called as well but he said in his introductory remarks our officers have been so busy making history in New South Wales, South Australia and New Zealand that they have had no time to write it.

So he had to give a very summarised version of what had taken place in New South Wales and the other parts of Australia in that year 1883. To celebrate the first anniversary Major Barker took the huge exhibition building which was then quite a new building and on New Year's Day 1884 they celebrated their first anniversary. Now when you realise how we plug away here for a whole year sometimes with very little in the way of visible results, I hope it excites you to imagine what had happened here with this brand new thing in the course of 12 months with these corps, officers, salvationists, there was what they called a monster march.

That doesn't mean they marched a monster but the march was large enough to be classified by that description. A monster march through the city streets, activities right through the day in the exhibition building and over 8,000 people in the night meeting. A band of 40 players led the singing.

Remember that the total population of Melbourne at that time was less than 300,000 persons and here's the army already so well established. Here in New South Wales 10 corps were opened including Newcastle and several in the area of Newcastle and also Goulburn. 30 officers were reported at the end of the year and it was estimated that there were 12,000 soldiers in adherence at the end of that first year in New South Wales.

The headquarters were set up at 260 Castle Ray Street. The numbering today has been altered. It's not quite the same numbering as it was then and the 260 Castle Ray Street is a little bit higher up the hill towards Bathurst Street to where the Protestant Hall was that I described last night.

Just between the Protestant Hall and Bathurst Street there's an antique shop there I think at the moment and it's just about in that area where their headquarters was established and they also had a printing and tailoring department in Pitt Street, 290 Pitt Street. The war cry was issued on the 24th of March 1883 and that was the first war cry in Australia. The earliest copy that I have is number 30 and here is the war cry dated Sydney, Saturday December the 15th 1883.

This is just 12 months after the army opened fire in Sydney. Quite a substantial piece of paper to take with you to the pubs cadets but here it is with articles. Mrs Booth writing about the critics of the Salvation Army and the Corps reports and quite a lot of inspirational reading here.

They're most interesting to go through in these days. That's the first, the Sydney war cry was the first war cry to be issued in Australia. South Australia followed very closely as we shall see in a moment or two.

The circulation built up to 10 000 copies per week. Brother Thomas Mewdyman that I mentioned last night ran the tailoring department and did so for a great many years and in turn his son took over the tailoring and I wouldn't be surprised if some of you here happened in your earlier days had a Mewdyman uniform and you'll know the name. Major Sutherland remained in charge throughout that year, major by now.

You may be interested to know the names of the corps that were open. Sydney was referred to as Sydney 1, Newtown was the second corps to be opened, Newcastle with outposts of Hexham and Ash Island, Balmain then Paddington then Goulburn then Walsing and West Maitland and Lambton and Raymond Terrace and just into 1884 the Bathurst Corps. In those days the corps reports are all headed, every corps took a distinctive name and they were great on their alliteration.

The Sydney Corps were called the Sydney Songsters and all their corps reports are headed in a great big caption, Sydney Songsters. The Balmain reports, the Balmain Braves, the Newtown Nuggets, the Paddington Pilgrims, the Lambton Lions, the Walsend Warriors. Indeed they went overboard with their alliteration of Walsend and in one of their reports they said from Walsend we want workers who will wage war willingly without wavering.

The Hexham, we used to talk about the Hexham Mosquitoes in my younger days but it was the Hexham Heroes at the corps. The Maitland Militants, they've still got a few militants up there. Goulburn Gideons and the Bathurst Bombardiers, that's a good one for Bathurst and for some reason Newcastle was not alliterative.

The Newcastle Corps was known as Canny Newcastle. I'm not too sure why but Newcastle was Canny Newcastle. Well in South Australia there was rapid expansion under Staff Captain Gibbs.

Eleven more corps were opened including Port Pirie, Port Augusta and down to Mount Gambier making a total of 15 corps in South Australia. 26 officers reported and five brass bands. A weekly edition of the War Cry was produced on April 6th just a week or two after the Sydney issue.

Queensland, I mentioned this last night, Captain Cairns endeavoured unsuccessfully to establish a corps at Ipswich. There are reports that other unnamed soldiers from England made unofficial and unsuccessful efforts to commence and maintain work in Brisbane. Amongst them would be Brother and Sister Harry from Torquay in England who in 1881 or 83 could have been involved in this way.

In later life they were soldiers of Brisbane Temple in Toowong. New Zealand is a thrilling story in itself. I don't propose to go into that in any great detail in these lectures.

It's really worthy of standing on its own. It is indeed an exciting story. Captain George Pollard, age 20, and Lieutenant Edward Wright, age 19, both salvationists of less than two years experience, left London in January 83 to open fire in New Zealand.

Now you imagine two young lads, raw, inexperienced, very inadequate training being sent from London to open fire in New Zealand. They did so in request to a letter that had been sent to General Booth by a lady by the name of Miss Valpy. And some of you here will have read the book which is called Dear Mr Booth, which is the way in which Miss Valpy addressed her letter requesting that salvationists be sent to New Zealand.

This same late Lieutenant Edward Wright is the officer that I mentioned last night who a year or two later officially opened the work in Brisbane and some years after that was responsible for pioneering the work in Japan. Well going back to Pollard and Wright, these two boys landed in Melbourne. They had a brief stopover where they enlisted three soldiers as helpers who were immediately commissioned as officers.

No two year training then. And the party arrived at Port Chalmers which is right down on the southern extremity of the South Island of New Zealand on the 27th of March with an audacious plan of campaign.

Can you imagine it? Pollard would work north from Dunedin and Wright would work south from Auckland and they undertook to shake hands in due course in Wellington in the middle.

And on the 1st of April 1883 Pollard launched the attack in Dunedin at a fountain which stands in the middle of the town. Their opening song was there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from my saviour's veins. They didn't follow that plan exactly although Wright did go to Auckland and they did work towards each other.

But nine months later at the end of 1883 they held their first congress in Dunedin and 600 soldiers, mostly uniformed, marched to the music of six bands. Ten corps had been established and there were 30 officers, again most of them locally raised and there had been over 5,000 converts during that period. I have here the actual song sheet that was used at that first congress in Dunedin in 1883 and on the back of it here is the field strength.

Actually it lists 11 corps here at that period with the names of the officers in charge of the corps at that time and it's really an exciting story how the army took root in New Zealand. Well you can see then that by the end of 1883 there were a total of 50 corps and 123 officers at work in Australia and New Zealand. This is in really the first 12 months of real activity.

Is it any wonder that Major Barker, surveying the enthusiastic scene at that first anniversary in the exhibition building in Melbourne looked over the great crowd and exclaimed, see what God hath wrought. Well it's really thrilling that 1883 but it continued into 1884 still with remarkable speed. There was a great deal of rapid skirmishing and probing of country towns.

It was almost like a type of guerrilla warfare, little parties of salvationists exploring and probing. It was not particularly difficult to launch work in those days because you didn't need any great capital outlay. Halls could be rented or adapted.

The quarters could be rented and the officers of those days were rather a tough breed. They didn't mind a great deal if there was nowhere to sleep. They could sleep in the hall on a form and if there was no salary they could go without.

They were so self-sacrificing and courageous that it's no wonder that the work spread as it did in these days. Cadets here, indeed all of us, could perhaps reflect on all this and wonder just why it is that the work does not develop with the same rapidity today. There are reasons and you might like to think of them but are there reasons why the work ought not to be developing faster than it is in these days.

I've summarised the position at the end of 1884. Victoria by this time reporting 32 corps. You've got the figures in front of you, 85 officers.

New South Wales by now reporting 23 corps, outposts and 60 officers. South Australia has now 34 corps and 70 officers. Tasmania, New Zealand 31 corps, 70 outposts and 60 officers.

A total of 123 corps at the end of two years. 129 outposts and 282 officers and there were approximately 25,000 soldiers and adherents in Australia. This is a remarkable story.

To celebrate the second anniversary in Melbourne, this time it was a gigantic march to quote their advertising, a gigantic march of 3,600 soldiers. I doubt whether we could turn out a march that big today. 3,600 soldiers with 13 vans passed through the city streets in Melbourne and 20,000 people assembled

for a rally which went on all day in Albert Park just out of Melbourne.

Here in Sydney 2,000 soldiers marched out along Parramatta Road to a rally in Kemperdown Park where they loudly cheered their Major. There was only one Major in New South Wales in those days. By this time Sutherland had gone back to England and the officer in charge was Major Lindsay.

So they loudly cheered their Major who addressed them from a Member of Parliament's trap. I would imagine some of the younger people here not too sure what a trap is. Not a mousetrap but if it had said a sulky you would perhaps have known what a parliamentarian's trap was.

In Christchurch, New Zealand, the second congress was held in January 1885. 26 corps represented 900 soldiers, seven vans marched through the city. Well these were two very thrilling years.

Buildings, the need for buildings large enough to accommodate the crowds was acute. Halls were hired in most cases. New South Wales reported no less than 51 hired buildings in use at the end of 1884 and in some cases old buildings, theatres, storerooms, brewery etc.

were secured and adapted to army use. The first hall to be erected by the army in Australia was in Parran in 1883. You remember I told you last night that a hall was in course of erection in Adelaide by a man by the name of Hooker.

I'm not including that hall here because at that time Hooker was not a salvationist. He became one afterwards but the first hall to be actually built by the army was this hall in Parran and halls were also built at North Melbourne and Ballarat in that year. In New South Wales the first barracks was built in Newtown and referring once again to this war cry, here is a big advertisement up in the top corner of the page.

Foundation stones, Newtown. This is for the new hall at Newtown. Two foundation stones will be laid on Saturday December the 22nd 1883 at 3pm by Joseph Mitchell Esquire, member Legislative Assembly and C Boots Esquire, Mayor.

Wanted 1000 bricklayers to lay one brick each. Outside bricks five shillings each. Inside bricks two and sixpence each and upwards.

Bricks found. A public tea at 4.30 and a monster salvation meeting. See handbills in next week's war cry.

So the Newtown hall was in course of erection when that war cry appeared on the street. The land cost 450 pounds and the building about 1000 pounds. Those would have been considerable sums to our comrades in those days.

The comrades of the Wall's End Corps built their hall with their own hands the same year and I was amused to read in the reports of one of these early war cries that even the DC and one or two knobs from headquarters took a hand in helping to build the Wall's End hall. The main event that happened that year was the laying of six memorial foundation stones for the erection of a city barracks in Goldman Street in Sydney. Even before this in April 83, this is quite early in the picture remember that it was only in December 82 that the first shots were fired here in Sydney.

About four months after that in April 83 a friend of the army leased and offered to the army a piece of land which he'd leased at the corner of Goldman and Dixon streets and proposals were made for the erection of a hall on that land which was to cost 650 pounds but this was never developed. The council in fact did

not give their approval for it although Commissioner Rusher in one of his war cry articles speaks of this as being built but actually the council turned it down. But the following year in 1884 the army had been able to secure a piece of land with a 66 foot frontage a little bit closer to George Street in Goldman Street the site where the old Congress Hall stood and still stands but here it is that they built their first city barracks.

Quite an impressive building which would seat 1,500 persons. Sir Henry Parks and other notable citizens took part in the stone laying and made cordial speeches. The tone of the speeches and the press reports of this and similar functions gave indication of growing appreciation of the army's purpose and work by members of the governments and the public in general.

Going back to our notes. Adaptation. Core work was developed on the basic English pattern although even the English pattern was not so very well established in these early days but Australian conditions particularly in the country areas called for some adaptation and innovation.

We shall deal with this in more detail next Monday evening but just to mention a sample of what I have in mind in South Australia two young men officers carrying swags and a tent tremped from town to town all the way to the barrier which had just been discovered the mining where Broken Hill now stands and they carried their swags from Adelaide right up to Broken Hill working amongst the men who were rushing towards the diggings at the barrier. Here in New South Wales already a flying brigade was working the interior of the colony they didn't fly on aeroplanes then maybe on horses and in New Zealand a two horse caravan driven by a converted cabby so it said was working the outlying areas. We shall see more of that next Monday evening.

It was not all plain sailing it was commonplace for gangs of larrikins to attack open air meetings to pelt marches with eggs refuse and even stones and to invade indoor meetings and damage property. In Sydney so it is said it often took them an hour for the march to cover the distance from Railway Square up to Casselray Street where their hall was located. The idea of the larrikins being to try and stop them marching to seize the flag to bash them about.

On one occasion the flag was saved only by Sister Cots wrapping it around her body and defying the mob to take it. That's a good story. In one Salvation Army in one South Australian town Salvation Army eggs were on sale at trippence a dozen guaranteed overripe.

In many cases this fierce opposition was stirred up and even subsidised by publicans who were incensed at the reduction in their trade. They were losing many of their customers. Many Salvationists were injured in these scuffles.

A good deal of army blood flowed in those days some seriously and a paramount in October 1884 the assistant to Captain John Dean a young man named Cadet M Thompson actually died as the result of the injuries he received at the hands of a mob. They were marching across the bridge over the Parramatta River set on by a mob and this young cadet received injuries from which he later died. The first Salvation Army martyr in Australia.

Not all the local authorities were happy about the army street meetings and musical efforts possibly with some good cause in those days too because the musical efforts by what we have read and heard were not always very attractive and in many Australian cities and towns Salvationists were arrested and fined and went to prison rather than pay the fines. A notorious case was at Ballarat where in 1891 to 92 no less than five groups of Salvationists including women were imprisoned for periods of up to one month. Hard labour

it was too.

At Wollongong and West Maitland and other places in the colonies repressive council bylaws and actions were overruled on appeal by higher authorities. That's an interesting angle that when the army appealed against these restrictive local bylaws almost invariably a higher court adjudged that the council bylaws were invalid and the army, these comrades, these early comrades of theirs won for us and for a great many other people too liberties that we enjoy today. This opposition was often counterproductive.

The courage and the tenacity of these new Salvationists merits high praise. They thrived on opposition and it says in this little book I held up before you a while ago that a few hard knocks were reckoned to be good for any corps. Railton in this little book too drew some solace from the fact that quote God wipes our tears away with five pound notes.

Certainly their brave stand gained many friends who gave encouragement and financial support. Between 1881 and 1907 when persecution of this kind ceased over 100 Salvationists here in Australia were fined or imprisoned. Thousands professed conversion during these early years.

Not all of them became Salvationists and there were reports that the spiritual life of many churches was revived by those who claimed holiness in army meetings. The contribution that the Salvation Army has made to the life of the Christian church has not yet been written up and it would be very difficult to assess or to tabulate and indeed you couldn't tabulate the very real contribution that the army has made over the years to the spiritual life of the Christian church in general. Many clergymen and many church people found the Lord through Salvation Army ministry or received a blessing which has been influential.

Well amongst those converted there are many stories that could be told. One of the most remarkable was the story of Paul Cott which I imagine you've all heard transported to New South Wales as a convict when a young girl, this woman, lived a life of violence and drunkenness. She was a fury when roused and as many as six policemen had a struggle to arrest her.

Armed with sharp pointed scissors and contemplating murder she was persuaded to go with Captain Rundle, it should be, I think it's got Randall in your notes, it should be Rundle, she was persuaded to go with Captain Rundle at West Maitland to his quarters to meet his wife. Other trophies, quite a lot of them were detailed here in this little book, there's a photo, photo here of five men all wearing uniforms and I was reading again this afternoon the story of these men. One of them here had been in Australia 26 years and in that time he'd managed to accumulate prison sentences which all added up to more than 26 years and had spent most of his time in Australia in jail, a wonderful case of conversion.

Another man here was known as a professor, he'd been an English member of Parliament at one stage, he came from a rich English family, got through no less than three fortunes that had been left to him, dissipated them all in wild living and finally became an Oriental astrologer and was making a living here in Australia by his fortune telling and that kind of thing. But the professor got converted too and here he is in army uniform and quite a lot of remarkable stories of conversion of these trophies of grace. They included criminals, pugilists, an ex-Roman Catholic priest and a nun, two vagabond sons of Anglican dignitaries in England, a man who was an ex-British MP and also described, I've just been speaking about him, professor of astrology, a noted rationalist and many others.

The conversion of notorious drunkards to lives of sobriety was an outstanding feature wherever the army opened fire. In 1884 a torchlight procession of 800 saved drunkards, try and imagine this, we call them

alcoholics now and I'm not too sure that our success rate is as good as it was in the days when we called them drunkards and got them at the penitent form and they got gloriously saved and lost the desire to drink right there and then in many cases. Well here was a torchlight procession of 800 saved drunkards passing through the crowded streets of Melbourne to the town hall.

One of Melbourne's converts, this will interest those of you that were here last night, remember the film of the founder, remember the ADC that came in behind him and was quickly gathering up all his papers and shuffling them into a case and ducking out through the door. There's always something funny about that and you all smiled and did a bit of a giggle about it last night. Well this is the man in 1884, a prodigal from a well-connected family in England who later as Brigadier F Cox travelled the world with the founder as his ADC.

He too was converted here as a wonderful trophy of God's grace here in Australia. We must mention the social service, this too was pioneered in Australia. We're very proud of the fact that many aspects of army social service which are now standard throughout the army world were actually pioneered here in Australia.

We owe a great deal to Major Barker for this. William Booth said our social operations are the natural outcome of our salvationism. It's not just a side issue with us, they go together, our salvationism and our social service.

This was proved true in Australia. Very soon after the commencement of the work in Melbourne, Major Barker through the helpfulness of Dr John Singleton was invited to visit jails and conduct meetings there. The doctor also placed his mission hall.

This doctor was a Christian gentleman who ran a mission in Little Bourke Street in Melbourne which at that time was a nest of brothels and Chinese opium dens, a notorious place, Little Bourke Street. The same, the little hall is still there today and the army is still doing a work in the hall in Little Bourke Street. Barker quickly saw the need to do something for discharged prisoners and on the 8th of December 1883 opened a house in Carlton, quite near the Melbourne jail as a home for ex-prisoners.

What concerned Barker was that the prisoners having completed their sentence were just let out of the door and that was it. Whether they had anywhere to go or any friends to look after them or any money in their pocket was immaterial. They'd completed their sentence and they were just abandoned outside the door with the result that many of them got into trouble again almost immediately and before long were back in jail.

So Barker set up this home quite near the old Melbourne jail and this was the first institution not only of that kind but of any kind in the Salvation Army world. This was the beginning of Salvation Army institutional care. He also formed a prison gate brigade of comrades who would meet these men early morning when they were discharged from jail and if they had nowhere to go or no friends to look after them would take them across to this home where they were cared for and where efforts were made to find employment for them.

When I was a territorial commander in Melbourne I located that building. It's still there and we had a function. We put a tablet on the wall of that building marking the fact that it was indeed the first Salvation Army institution in the world.

A few weeks later on the 4th of January 84 a similar institution was opened for what were then called fallen sisters. They don't regard themselves as being fallen today but they were fallen sisters then. This too was in Carlton and in April 84 a month or two later a rescue home for women was opened in Geelong.

By 1889 there were 11 social homes operating four for men and seven for women and this too is a first. Some of these were at that early date receiving government financial support. Australia is the first country in the world to receive government financial support for its social operations.

Major Barker had a tremendous compassion for the down and out and the fallen. He didn't actually come from that strata himself. He came from the midlands of England.

He was a compositor, a printer and came to London on one occasion and was passing on the top deck of a bus the railway arches at Bethnal Green and was surprised to hear a man standing in the street and calling out fire with a crowd of people around him and wondering what was happening. He got down off the bus to investigate and it was a Salvation Army open air meeting and almost without planning to do so the crowd caught him up and he was sort of impelled by the crowd into the core. They had a core underneath one of these arches at the railway arches at Bethnal Green and there James Barker got converted but he gave them a good deal of trouble over and over again.

They lost count of the number of times that he came to the holiness table. They almost despaired of him ever getting established in his new found faith but eventually he did praise God and even in those early days the founder saw something in this man that made him say to the core officer what's that young man Barker he'll do big things for God and the army in days to come. The founder saw some potential in this man.

He became a printer in the army's printing works in London and as I told you last night he and his newly married wife were dispatched out here to take charge of the work in Australia. Well now this man had a tremendous compassion for the down and out and the fallen and at the same time he had a peculiar facility and gift for winning the confidence and the support of government leaders and influential citizens in a remarkable we take this for granted nowadays but then it's remarkable the way that Barker won the confidence of government and parliamentarians and other prominent people and he rapidly became one of the best known and best loved men in Victoria. It was this confidence which inspired the government to give him authority as a special constable to apprehend without warrant.

Any child apparently under the age of 16 years found residing in conditions of moral danger and armed with this authority Barker raided brothels, opium dens and the like and rescued many young girls. Well now I've concluded by saying these pioneer salvationists displayed a compelling combination of godliness and guts, happy daredevils who were all out for Jesus and they challenge every one of us here tonight, retired officers, other officers, cadets and comrades, they challenge every one of us to be worthy to follow in their steps. We'll sing a chorus and then I'll say something about the motion picture.

Chorus number two is one that I think you'll all know. As I said to you earlier I'll speak to you now about the motion picture seeing that it was we've seen it tonight it's fresh in our mind and this may give us a little bit more time on Tuesday night to deal with questions. Early in 1892 two officers a Major Barrett and Captain Joseph Perry whom we've been hearing about tonight toured various divisions equipped with what was then called a magic lantern and slides in the interest of evangelism and the founders darkest England scheme.

You may remember that in 1890 the founder launched his book called *In Darkest England and the Way Out* with a very marvellous scheme for the rehabilitation of the submerged tenth the poor people in the United Kingdom and evidently these officers were collecting funds for that scheme. This work was continued by Captain Perry who was placed in charge of what was then called the Limelight Department. His equipment included a graphophone in quotes g-r-a-p-h a graphophone and in August 1896 what was described as quote the greatest wonder of the 19th century the kinematograph k-i-n-e-m-a-t-o-g-r-a-p-h-e the kinematograph was demonstrated in Melbourne.

Prominent Herbert Booth who was always receptive to new ideas sent Perry who by this time was a Major to learn what he could from the demonstration. The result was that the army purchased one of the first kinematograph projectors to be imported into Australia. It arrived from Paris in 1897.

Few films were available and these were of only a few minutes duration and a very limited interest although of course they were sensational to the audiences of that time. Arrangements were soon made to purchase a camera and apparatus to process the film and to produce our own motion pictures. A number of films were produced including two thousand feet dealing with the army's social work and also a film of the congress march in Melbourne in March 1898.

That film of the social work was used as a lecture by Mrs. prominent Herbert Booth and was given to crowded halls all over the continent. Following this Herbert Booth conceived the idea and wrote the script for what he called a photo drama depicting the courageous stand of the early Christian martyrs. It was called *Soldiers of the Production* took 12 months and Major Perry showed great ingenuity in setting up most of the scenes on the tennis court of the girls home at Marambina in Melbourne which we heard of.

Huge backdrops were draped over the enclosure around the tennis court and costumes correct in every detail were made by the staff and the girls at the home. A cast of 600 was involved officers, cadets and young people all amateurs. The film which was cut to three thousand feet was sent overseas to be hand coloured as were the 200 slides some of which we saw tonight all sent to Paris to be hand coloured.

There were several reels of film and 220 coloured slides which were screened while the operator was changing reels on his film. The commandant was the narrator and the program ran for two and a quarter hours. It is generally reckoned to be the first full length feature film produced anywhere in the world and the army was regarded as a pioneer in the field of visual education.

That claim has been challenged a little bit in recent years. About every two years some journalist gets on to this story and thinks he's got a scoop and you'll read about it in the *Women's Weekly* or some other magazine about this early film made by the Salvation Army and one or two people have written books about it. I've got quite a fat file at home that I've gathered up over the years about this particular film and in these books that have been written by one or two experts in this field they rather dispute the idea that this was the first full length film simply because while they were changing reels they used still slides and a narration was made whilst the film was being screened and they refer now to a film about our patron saint one known as Ned Kelly who was hanged just before Major Barker arrived in Melbourne and this is now referred to as being the first full length feature film in Australia.

Well it's a matter of dispute between these experts but so far as we're concerned here tonight we'll say the army got in first. The film had its premiere before an audience of 4,000 people packed into the Melbourne Town Hall on the 13th of September 1900. My mother was a cadet just then and I have some of her writing at home and she describes how she went to the Melbourne Town Hall that night to see the commoners

lecture.

It was later screened in crowded halls in the main cities of Australia and New Zealand. The Sydney Morning Herald no less reported quote the effect it produced is greater than anything Doré the artist ever produced and the kinematographed portrayal the martyrdom of Saint Polycarp quite big as Reuben's marvellous picture. That's the art critic of the Sydney Morning Herald letting his hair down a little bit.

At the time the army's equipment and operator were amongst the best in the country and in 1901 Major Perry was appointed by the federal and the Victorian governments as the official photographer to film the opening of the first federal parliament in Melbourne. The army had the best equipment and the best operator in the country at that particular time. Other films were produced notably The Scottish Covenanters and another one called Heroes of the Cross.

In 1906 and 7 two Biorama bands which we heard about tonight were formed to tour Australia and New Zealand with the moving pictures the bandsmen having to double up as orchestra, sound effects, vocalists and projectionists as well as being bandsmen. This activity was discontinued in 1910 but it is interesting to know that the army was a pioneer in this field. One of my very early recollections as a very small boy was when the Biorama band came to Gympie in it would be 1906 and gave their program in a picture theatre in Gympie and during the course of the or towards the end of the program the lantern running on the limelight a flash of light suddenly shot out through the case a flash of flame and the case of the projector and some idiot in the audience yelled out fire which immediately started a panic and one of my early recollections is of that panic in that theatre in Gympie with people pushing each other through the shop windows and trampling on each other all trying to get out of that theatre at once because of the panic.

Actually there was no danger at all the whole thing was over in a minute or two but that's what happens when a panic takes over. Later on my father used to operate what was called a magic lantern and I was his operator in my younger days when we used acetylene gas in the projector and some of you here may remember the rather smelly tanks and the rubber tubing and all the rest of it to get the acetylene gas into the projector and my father had quite a collection of slides the service of songs that were so touching in those days there was nearly always some dear little girl with a drunken father who gave her a bad time and finally the little girl died and the father the drunken father got converted and everybody in the audience was in tears and we sang one or two songs those kind of stories I used to work the lantern while people were singing and my father was telling the story. Well those were the good old days and it's interesting to hear of them here tonight.

Well now it's almost time for us to finish I wondered if we might venture to sing a song that will be new to some of you here tonight it's number two on the song sheet on the song sheet the two copies of the original film were made search has been made high and low all over the world for those copies one of them we know that Herbert Booth took with him back to America when he left Australia went back there but nobody has ever been able to find either copy of those films either in Australia or in America they would be of invaluable historical importance if they could be found but up to the moment nobody's been able to find them song number two

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/12/SID12352.mp3>

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