

COBB AND CO.

COACH ROUTES IN 19TH CENTURY - LOGAN

For almost the first ten years following settlement in the Logan Agricultural Reserve in 1861, transport in and out of the Logan District was limited to three very primitive options. A traveller either rode or drove his own horse, travelled by river, or walked. Not until the 1870's did the introduction of regular road connections to Brisbane alleviate this isolation, and provide a reliable means of contact with the outside world.

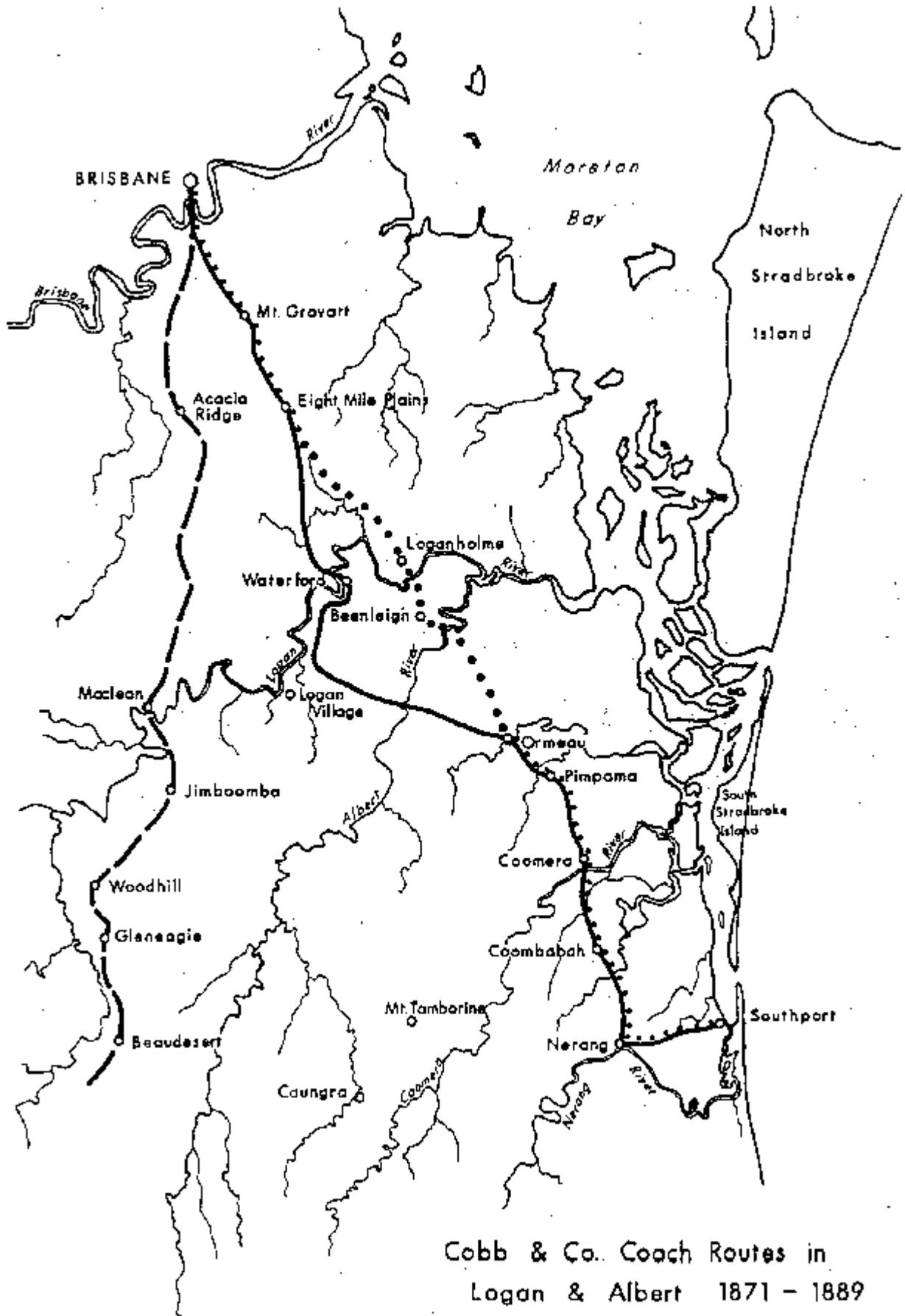
The Origins of Cobb and Co.

The name Cobb and Co. has become so associated with the Australian myths that many people today are surprised to discover that it was originally an American venture, established by American citizens with Concord Coaches imported from the United States. Begun by Freeman Cobb and J.M. Peck as a service to the Victorian goldfields in 1854, Cobb and Co. was to become, over the next seventy years, the largest coaching network of its kind anywhere in the world. At the height of its powers in the 1870's, Cobb and Co. operated services not only in Australia, but also in New Zealand and even Japan, where a line between Yokohama and Tokyo was established in November, 1869.

Cobb and Co. come to Logan

Information about Cobb and Co. routes in Logan is extremely contradictory. All that can be stated with certainty is the fact that Logan was on at least two, possibly three coach lines, and that the frequency of the services as well as the stops changed from time to time in response to public needs. Even the exact date of the first service is open to doubt. There is evidence of a coach service through Browns Plains as early as 1863, but presumably this was not Cobb and Co. Cobb and Co's first official route in Queensland was not established until 1865 when a line started up between Brisbane and Ipswich. Initial services tended to operate westward, and it was not until the 1870's that services began operating to Nerang, via Logan.

Part of this reluctance to establish a service must be attributed to the poor state of the roads which were still little better than goat tracks. Logan Road itself, a former aboriginal trail was known disparagingly as "Slack's Track" (after William Slack of Slacks Creek), and in 1865 a letter from the Engineer of Roads described it as "at present almost impassable". The earliest reference to a coach service in the area thus dates only from 1870, when a mail service between Brisbane and Pimpama began operating on a twice weekly basis. Whether this coach was actually a Cobb and Co. coach is debatable, since early records do not always distinguish between Cobb and Co., and the various private carriers operating during this period. It is for this reason that tracing early coach routes is today such a frustrating exercise.



Cobb & Co. Coach Routes in
Logan & Albert 1871 - 1889

The Nerang routes

The first definite reference to a Cobb and Co. route, as such, dates from January, 1871, when a weekly service commenced between Brisbane and Nerang. This coach is known to have carried the mail and it would appear that the service which commenced in 1875 and which is occasionally postulated as Logan's first coach route is a separate service entirely. The 1871 Nerang service ran through Eight Mile Plains, Waterford (site of Logan's first post office) where it crossed the river by ferry, down Dairy Creek Road to Bahr's Scrub (Logan Breakthrough), and onto the Albert River by way of Windaroo Lane (Bannockburn). The coach then continued south to Nerang Creek via Stanmore and Ormeau. Horses were changed at Eight Mile Plains, and at Beenleigh, where the Beenleigh Hotel (corner of City Road and George Street) was later to serve as a depot.

Demand for the service was such that within weeks of its establishment its frequency was increased to three services a week. Later, it ran every day, and in 1875 a second Nerang route seems to have commenced, running every three weeks via Loganholme. Cobb and Co.'s official breakdown of the route was as follows:-

South Brisbane to -

Eight Mile Plains	8 miles	<i>Breakfast at wayside inn.</i>
Loganholme	10 miles	<i>Cross Logan River by ferry.</i>
Beenleigh	2 miles	
Pimpama	10 miles	<i>Breadsell's Inn. (Pimpama was then the centre of the arrowroot growing industry).</i>
Coomera	6 miles	<i>Mrs Bozier's house for refreshments. Cross Coomera River by ferry. Hilly stretch ahead to Coombabah.</i>
Coombabah	6 miles	<i>Road to Southport branched here. More hills to traverse on next section.</i>
Nerang	6 miles	<i>Kennedy's Commercial Hotel.</i>
	<hr/> 48 miles	

The route terminated at Nerang. Passengers wishing to go to Southport travelled by boat down the Nerang River until the service was extended to Southport in 1882.

The Inland routes

One very early coach route which is known to have passed through the Browns Plains district was the Casino - Brisbane mail coach, which commenced operation in 1863. This route many not have been one of Cobb and Co's., since it pre-dates their arrival in Queensland by some two years, and was abolished in 1872 when the Nerang service had become established and began carrying the mail. The service, which was jointly financed by the New South Wales and Queensland Governments, ran once a week from Brisbane, through Coopers Plains, Browns Plains, Jimboomba, Mundoolun, Nindooindah, Beaudesert, Tamrookum and Teleton. The coach then crossed the border and continued to the Casino Post Office.

Other coaches running from Brisbane to Beaudesert are known to have stopped to change horses at George Scott's Rose and Crown Hotel at Coopers Plains (now Acacia Ridge), at the Greenbank Hotel (later burned down and replaced by the Teviot) and at McGoldrick's Union Hotel in Maclean. The Greenbank Hotel was located in Meadows Road, and stabling facilities were provided by a dairy farm in the adjacent lane. The first driver on this route appears to have been called Howard. He was later succeeded by a Mr Markwell.

A Journey by coach

Road travel, whether by Cobb and Co. or one of the private carriers was always an uncomfortable experience. The slung suspension of the coaches did little to alleviate jolting caused by the unsealed, rutted tracks which sufficed for roads, whilst wet weather turned the roads into impassable bogs. Transport could therefore be slow. In 1975, Julius Holland of Bundall wrote an acerbic letter to the Postmaster General in Brisbane, remarking that "if the Coachman did not spend so much time on having his dinner at Eight Mile Plains, we might have some chance of the mail arriving at Nerang by 2 pm and being delivered on the same day."

Perhaps the best description of a Cobb and Co. journey in Logan is provided by the irate traveller who wrote to the *Logan Witness* in 1878:-

Sir, I desire through your columns, to call the attention of the proprietors and managers of the line of coaches running between Brisbane and Beenleigh, to the disgraceful and dirty state of the coaches.

It is common practice for the grooms, and others in charge of the coaches to put under the seats, dirty cans of grease, or tar, and even oil for use of Cobb & Co., which filthy compound by the shaking of the coach gets driven all about, whereby the dresses of the ladies travelling are totally ruined, at a cost to these passengers of perhaps four or five pounds.

I have seen this happen many times these last few years. Another nuisance is that instead of the space under the seats being clear for passengers feet they are more often filled up with old harness, collars, rusty chains, swingle trees, and other rubbish, which belonging to Cobb & Co. should be put elsewhere so that passengers can travel with a little more comfort than they have ever done on this run before.

Yours, etc. Traveller."

The Demise of Cobb and Co.

Cobb and Co.'s heyday is usually regarded as being the 1870's, yet, even then, the seeds of their destruction were already being sown. Queensland's first railway, to Grandchester in Moreton Shire was completed in 1865, and as the network of rail transportation is slowly spread throughout the State, the coaching lines were pushed further and further west, into the country areas where there was no competition from trains. Logan's first railway line was completed in 1888, and in 1889 the daily Cobb and Co. service finally ceased. The coaches were not to return until 1988 when the Bicentennial Coach Run passed through Logan on its way from Melbourne to Cairns.