Among the many collections at the CSU Regional Archives is a small book titled Moore's Australian Almanac, containing a snapshot of Wagga in 1918. This "snapshot" is not in the form of a photograph or a map, but rather it is a description of the town that precedes a list of government officials, societies and clubs, professional men and various businesses in Wagga.

The aim of these descriptions would have been to inform readers as well as to encourage them to visit. And, though such amenities as a sewage system, street lighting and asphalted roads and footpaths may seem oddly unexciting to us today, apparently in 1918 they were the height of progress in country towns.

In the same way, Coomaundra draws the reader's attention to its seating capacity. Gundagai praises its healthy climate. Junee is very proud of its improved water supply, and Narrandera's "splendid sewage system and electric lights" are one of the town's highlights.

An interesting sign of the times evident in this small book is in the way that, while many of the advertisements are promoting motor garages, the descriptions of each town in the almanac have a heavy reliance on rail – the distances, the station amenities, etc. In 1919, the railway line to Wagga, for example, was only 40 years old and trains still would have been the most comfortable and easiest way to travel.

Wagga

This cathedral city is situated on the Murrumbidgee, 341 miles from Sydney and 267 miles from Melbourne on the main Southern Line. There is a railway refreshment room at the Wagga Railway Station. Wagga is the largest and best country business centre, the capital of the Riverina, the richest pastoral and agricultural centre. Its avenues of beautiful trees are famous, having called forth the admiration of Max O'Rell, the renowned traveller and journalist, in his book on Australia. The installation of a modern water system has made Wagga the healthiest of country towns, typhoid fever and other scourges being unknown. The town is lit by gas from the municipal works. By-products have been so well used that there are 14 miles of asphalted roads and footways.

There is an unlimited water supply from the Murrumbidgee, the reservoirs at the pumping station having been greatly enlarged. Its Agricultural Show held yearly in August is acknowledged to rank next to the Royal Show. Stock sales are held every Thursday at the Municipal Yards, where there are large yards, and a brick market. The Government Experiment Farm, four miles from the town, is the finest in New South Wales, and has trained hundreds of young men for the land, with great success. Electorate of Wagga Wagga. Population 15,000. District 60,000.

Population 15,000. District 60,000.

Narrandera

On the Murrumbidgee River, 60 miles from Junee at junction of Hey and Toomulwa lines, and 385 miles by rail from Sydney, Pastoral and agricultural country, large areas of which have been successfully put under wheel, and the district is rapidly changing from pastoral to the agricultural industry. The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, now settled with a population of 3000, is in operation 16 miles of the town, Yanco being 14 miles and Leeton 18 miles away. The town water supply is provided with a large reservoir kept full by engine pump erected on the bank of the river. The town is provided with splendid sewerage and electric light. Commonwealth electorate of Riverina, State Electorate of the Murrumbidgee. Population 3000. Rail direct. Population 9000. Rail direct.

Growth: The City of Wagga Wagga in colour, taken on September 9, 1857 (CSUWA: RW1574/492)

Upcoming event

People and Place is a current research project on the many layers of history in Wagga's main street undertaken by Dr Nancy Blacklow. In her research, Dr Blacklow has especially utilised the resources at the CSU Regional Archives, the Museum of the Riverina, and the memories of the people who lived, worked and played in Nagambie and Bayley streets.

A free presentation by Dr Blacklow on her research so far will be given at the Museum of the Riverina (Historic Council Chambers) on Saturday, September 15, at 11am.

Bookings can be made through the Museum of the Riverina on 6295 9555.