Cup’s golden history

Wayne Doubleday

at the archives

FORSYTH Street – what’s in a name?

George Forsyth arrived in NSW around 1840. He managed a pastoral run in the Lower Murrumbidgee Pastoral District for Mr John Tooth, and later opened a retail store in Lower Tarcutta with his brother, Thomas.

In 1855, the partnership with his brother was dissolved and George purchased the Wagga branch store of “R Davison and Co” of Gundagai. This brick store was one of the main and best known commercial houses between Sydney and Melbourne and was viewed as a general supply depot for pastoralists. Forsyth was appointed Postmaster at Wagga from January 1, 1858 succeeding Frederick Tancock who had held the position since 1849.

For 10 years the post office business was run out of Forsyth’s store, although he was only postmaster for eighteen months. He then became a stock and station agent and, by the early 1860s was one of only two stock and station agencies in Wagga Wagga.

In 1869, Forsyth became a wholesale distributor when he opened his bonded store in Kincaid Street (the building was still standing in August 1980 and the Heritage Branch of the Planning and Environment Commission tried to stop its demolition). Forsyth also took a great interest in the growing Wagga community and its affairs.

He was a Justice of the Peace and played a pivotal role in the establishment of the local Mechanics’ Institute, Hospital, National School and other town amenities. He was also one of the original directors of the Wagga Bridge Company and a member of the first Committee of the Murrumbidgee Pastoral Association.

Attending the public meeting regarding the incorporation of Wagga in 1870, Forsyth was nominated for the South Ward and polled the highest number of votes for any candidate. It is therefore not surprising that he was duly elected the first mayor of Wagga on June 20, 1870, and then re-elected mayor on four occasions until he decided not to stand in 1875.

Forsyth amassed a considerable fortune and made many improvements in the town among which was the building of Westoe House in about 1869. He also had other allotments and cottages in the township including the corner of Flamsworth and Kincaid Streets opposite the old Bank of NSW and next to the site of his store.

George Forsyth left Wagga in 1876 to live on a pastoral property at Yarrangobilly in the Kiandra district, but continued to visit Wagga periodically until he died of heart disease at Kempsey on May 25, 1887.

Forsyth Street more than a name

The CSU Regional Archives is extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month. On these days, the archives will be open from 10am to 5pm. The next Saturday opening is today. This trial initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours. It is hoped that enough researchers and visitors will avail themselves of this service to warrant it becoming a permanent occurrence.

What you need to know

The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blaxalmore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Holy Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archivist staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward enquiries for a fee of $55 per hour including copying and postage.

Further information: phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au. For further information, visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

first advertisement for a horse race at the Wagga Gold Cup in May, 1863 at Wagga Railway Station’s south dock. (CSU Regional Archives – Tom Lennon Collection – RW1574.)