

What you should know

■ The CSU Regional Archives is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue.

■ Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage.

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

Hunters – from Ireland to Wagga

at the archives

Wayne Doubledy



Hunters on the Hill is one of Wagga's most well known and longest lasting businesses, having been in the same premises since 1872.

William Cowan Hunter was born on December 3, 1823 in Newtown of Limerick in the County of Derry, Ireland.

Once he had completed his education, he initially worked for his father and then moved on to Derry, Belfast, Limerick, Dublin, and then Manchester and London, before moving to St Louis in Missouri, in the United States. By the time he was 26 years old he had joined the Mounted Volunteers of California, Mariposa Battalion, under the command of Major James D. Savage.

Around that time, Hunter moved to California to work in the goldmines until 1852, when he left America for the Victorian goldfields.

He lived in the new township of Chiltern and opened a bookstore there. He took great interest in the progression of the town and was elected to the first Borough Council.

In 1866 Hunter moved to Wagga with his wife Emily and established a new business. His store was located in newly constructed brick buildings at what is now 110 Fitzmaurice Street.

Hunter's store initially advertised the following items for sale; books, stationery, seeds, toys, fancy goods, patent medicines, tobacco, snuff and cigars.

In 1870 the lower end of Fitzmaurice Street was inundated with flood waters and reportedly cost Hunter a hundred pounds in damage.

This is also the reason attributed to his relocation to new premises, 68 Fitzmaurice Street, opposite the Court House in 1872. Hunter was involved in many community organisations and associations.

He was a trustee of the Building Society, the Postal Reform Committee, the Church of England finance committee, the Progress Committee, the Murrumbidgee Land Tax Association and the Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

He was involved with the opening of the Hampden Bridge, and with advocating this part of the colony for the Federal Capital.

The *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* described him as a "staunch and uncompromising free trader" who was also heavily involved with the



This photograph of Hunters on the Hill (RW1 150/5), demonstrates many of the various items that could be purchased there during the early 1900s. The CSU Regional Archives holds a significant collection of Hunters Newsagency records dating from 1904 to 1984, accessioned at RW356.

Wagga branch of the Free Trade Association.

Hunter was also the founder of the Wagga Wagga Literacy Club and was president of that club until he died.

He was extremely fond of this club, and even asked for members to be pall bearers at his funeral. He was elected an alderman of the Wagga Council from 1889 to 1893 and was reportedly the first to suggest the establishment of a Chamber of Commerce.

On February 6, 1896 Hunter advised the public that, due to continued ill-health, he was "disposing of his business" to his sons, Winthrop and Robert, and to his daughter, Muriel. William Cowan Hunter died a month later on March 17, 1896 aged 73 years.

Winthrop and Robert continued their father's business together, under the name Hunter Brothers. In the early 1900s, Robert left to establish a business known as Hunter the Stationer, in Hunter Street, Newcastle.

A historical publication, *The Progress of Wagga Wagga and District*, lists many of the widely varying items Hunter Brothers

had for sale in 1915.

These included firearms, sewing machines, musical instruments, phonographs, gramophones, records, toilet requisites, crockery and cutlery, jewellery, clocks, silverware, fancy glassware, toys, flowers, leatherware, travelling bags, pictures, picture frames, hampers, flower and vegetable seeds.

The newspaper department had "all daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, and ladies' journals" and a wide range of historical, scientific and fictional books were also available to the public.

The publication also advised that Hunter's had sporting goods for every requirement, "There is not an article that the athlete can require that will not be found at Hunters, except a rowing boat, perhaps."

Winthrop continued to manage the business and even lived above the shop, with his living room directly above a spiral staircase through which he could observe the goings-on within the shop.

Winthrop did not have any children and so brought his

nephew, Lendon Hunter Shaw, into the business in 1919.

He passed the management of Hunters over to Shaw in 1935.

In 1967, the business was acquired by Mr. Graham Irons, which was the first time Hunters had been owned by someone outside the Hunter family.

During the 1970s, Irons expanded the business and created the Hunters on the Hill Office Supply Centre at 10 Gurwood Street, which provided the public with wholesale stationery, office stationery and furniture.

Irons also opened a specialist card shop in the Sturt Mall, called The Card Cage.

References: Hunters Newsagency Collection (CSU Regional Archives – RW356); *A History of Wagga Wagga* by Keith Swan; *Wagga Wagga: A History* by Sherry Morris; *The Progress of Wagga Wagga and District, Biographical Index of Wagga Wagga* compiled by Sherry Morris; *The Wagga Wagga Express* – December 1 and 15, 1866; *The Wagga Wagga Advertiser* – February 6, 1896; March 19, 1896; October 10, 1936