

The Town That Saved Queensland



The National Trust of Queensland
Gympie Branch

The Town That Saved Queensland

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Concept & co-ordination: Gympie Branch of The National Trust of Queensland



The National Trust of Queensland

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Foreword

The National Trust of Queensland's prime objective is to safeguard the buildings, structures, and homes of early Australia, and it is the proud ambition of the Gympie Branch of the National Trust to pursue the same objective locally.

In our tenth year of existence, therefore, we commissioned a series of sketches of historically and aesthetically important features of Gympie constructed in the gold mining area, 1867-1925. These sketches and accompanying text are contained in this publication.

With the favourable assistance of His Worship the Mayor, M. Venardos, and other aldermen, funds were made available by the City Council, and by the Widgee Shire Council, to help us with our publication. Money was also raised locally by antique auctions and other functions staged by our members. This Branch of the National Trust of Queensland is profoundly grateful to the above instrumentalities, and to the people of Gympie, for their generous support.

Many of the older residents of this city have poignant memories of working in the buildings depicted in this book. In its own way *The Town That Saved Queensland* will help to preserve the work of their predecessors from the ravages of time.

Lord Thomas Babington Maculay, historian, essayist, and politician, once said: "A people who take no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors, will never achieve anything to be remembered by."

I am sure this could never be said of the people of Gympie.

Elizabeth Graham
Chairman, Gympie Branch of The National Trust of Queensland

Introduction: Early Days

Gympie, situated on the Mary River, is the centre of one of the most thriving farming areas in south-east Queensland. The days of the once-rich goldfield are only a memory now, with little visible evidence remaining in the locality.

Gold was discovered here by James Nash in 1867, with the goldfield being proclaimed on 30 October of that year. The discovery provided a great stimulus to the development of the region as well as to the young state of Queensland. Separated from New South Wales only eight years earlier, it was struggling to survive.

Several large cattle stations had been established along the river before the discovery of gold, and the rain forest, rich in red cedar, was already yielding its harvest. But these undertakings were being carried on under difficulties of isolation and transport.

The most productive part of the goldfield was just under five kilometres in length and less than two kilometres wide. Within a few weeks, thousands of hopeful prospectors had flocked there, followed by those intent on setting up business undertakings. Tents sprang up everywhere. The goldfield was initially called Nashville, but the name was soon changed to Gympie, after a local species of stinging tree, known to the Aborigines as Gimpi-Gimpi. Tents were soon replaced by slab and bark structures and within a short time by more substantial buildings — shops, churches, music halls and hotels — to cater for the miners.

Thus Gympie came into existence. Roads were opened up throughout the district and eventually a railway was constructed: first to Maryborough, then to Brisbane. Not only gold, but the products of the land began to flow to the outside world in ever-increasing quantities.

The mining industry supported the city for almost sixty years, with a gradually declining influence. Gold to the value of £14 million was won, with the most productive years being 1902 to 1904.

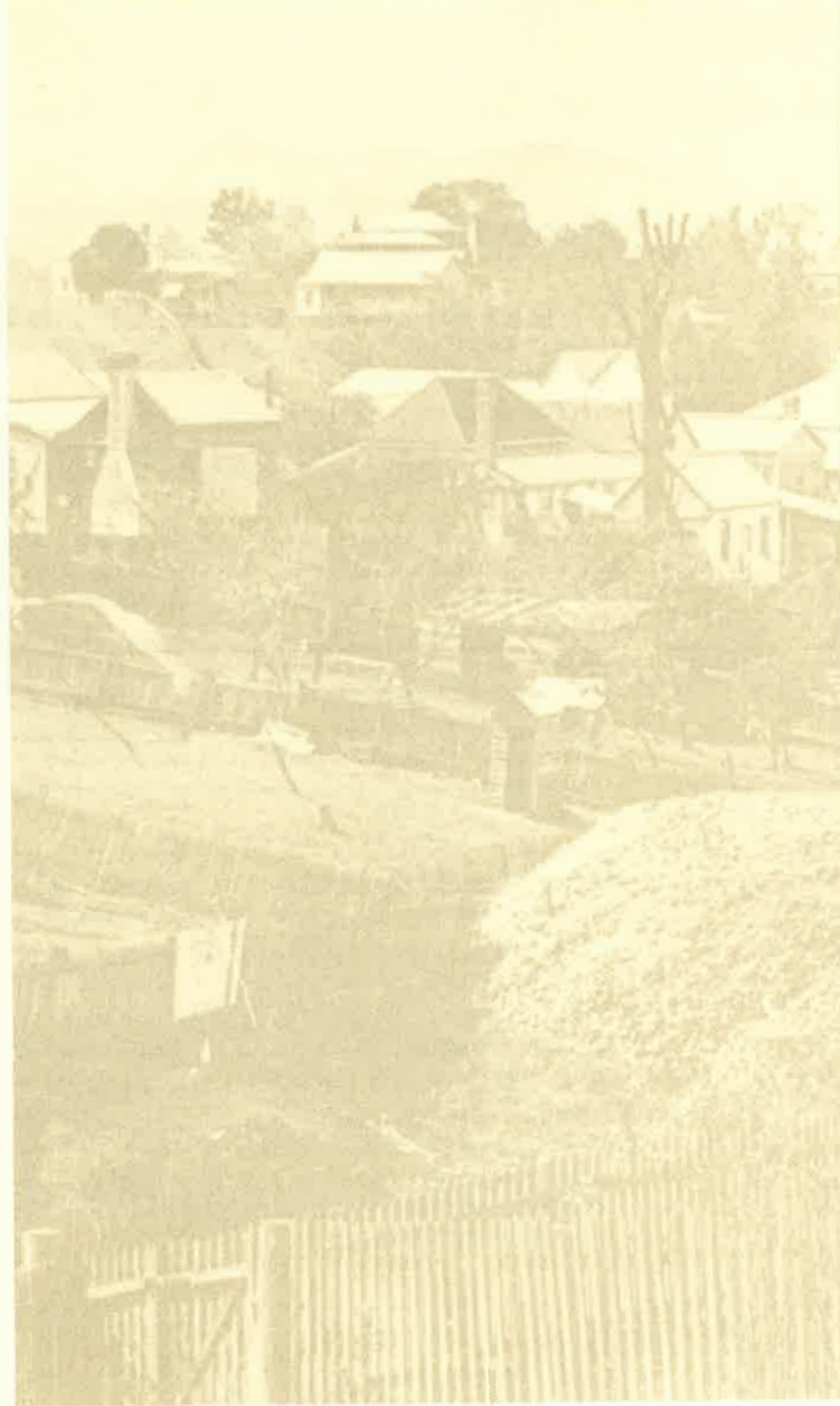
When mining virtually ceased in the mid-1920s, the rich agricultural and pastoral district continued to provide prosperity. Gympie's future is now more secure than ever before, with its diverse production of beef, milk, fruit, and vegetables, and timber from re-forestation plantations.

Many of the buildings illustrated in this book were built in those heady mining days between 1885 and 1900, and while public buildings and some business premises were constructed of brick and stone, almost all private dwellings were built of timber. This is probably because timber was plentiful and cheap in comparison with other materials, and at the same time provided coolness and graceful living in the sub-tropical climate.

Commercial and Industrial Buildings

Sketches by Mark Trotter

Red Hill, Gympie, 1896
(Reproduced courtesy of the John Oxley Library)





The Scottish Mine Retort House

The only mining building surviving on the goldfield, this was part of the Scottish Gympie Gold Mines Ltd.

Built in 1897, it is a substantial, brick-based, weather-board building, with a high, well-ventilated roof and several sash-type windows. At the eastern end is a large brick chimney in excellent condition, below which were installed the wood-fired retorts. The floor is of concrete, surrounded by a concrete trough. The retorts have long been removed, and the building is empty except for large heat shields in front of the fireplace, located so as to retain the maximum amount of heat in the retorts.

The gold came from the crushing batteries in the form of an amalgam of gold and mercury. This was heated in the retorts, with the mercury fuming off at a comparatively low temperature and passing through a water-cooled conduit to condense and be recovered. The gold was then smelted in crucibles and poured into moulds, resulting in bars of bullion gold.

The building stands a tall eight metres high, and yet when seen in photographs from the mining years, it seems a midget building attached to the vast battery complex of the Scottish Gympie Gold Mines.

As a result of a grant from the National Estate programme for 1981-82, the Gympie City Council has restored the Retort House to good condition, and it has been listed by The National Trust of Queensland.



The Mine Headframe

The mine headframe was erected in 1975 by the Gympie and District Historical Society as part of the Historical Museum Complex.

It is located directly above the shaft of the former No. 2 South Great Eastern Mine, which operated from 1897 until 1917 and for several years was the goldfield's richest producer. On the nearby engine foundations a steam-operated winding engine, originally used at Gympie, has recently been installed.

The headframe is a near replica of the original, and its purpose is to demonstrate the mining methods of long ago, when many such headframes were to be seen throughout the goldfield. The tall brick chimneys, poppet legs (headframes), and huge heaps of waste mullock were for many years a feature of the landscape.

The poppet legs of this headframe, 18 metres in length and 30 centimetres in diameter sapped, came from the state forest at Kenilworth.



Deep Creek Railway Bridge

A link in the Gympie–Brisbane line, the bridge over Deep Creek proved something of an engineering feat when constructed in 1888–89 without the assistance of modern equipment.

The central portion consists of a steel superstructure supported on tall concrete pylons, and at each end there was a long trestle-supported approach, most of which has now been filled to a solid embankment.

Early photographs show a number of small mines in close proximity to the bridge, with the tall poppet legs of the famous Monkland mines in the background. Deep Creek contained some of the richest deposits of gold on the goldfield, and these were worked for many years.

Deep Creek bridge is located near the confluence of Deep Creek and the Mary River, and when flood waters rose to a record height of 25 metres (83 feet 6 inches) in 1893, only the rails were exposed. It has on many occasions proved its worth in time of flood by providing the only access from the Monkland locality to Gympie, when a special train runs at intervals between the two stations.



The Australian Hotel

This is one of Gympie's oldest hotels, and is a landmark on Caledonian Hill. A photograph taken in 1883 shows the Australian Hotel looking exactly as it does today.

As with most hotels of its era in south-east Queensland, the Australian resembles a big brother of the vernacular house style. It is sensibly designed, with a high pitch main roof for insulation, ventilators at the peak, and timber verandahs to protect the exposed stud external walls and provide a cool shaded transition from the hot Queensland sun.

The finely detailed fretwork in columns and balustrades is typical of these elegant old buildings of the past.



216-18 Mary Street

Totally dissimilar in detail, yet complementary in scale and proportion, these two buildings were erected in the early 1880s. The building on the right, no. 218, is the earlier by a year or two.

No. 218 was built for Sir Horace Tozer, solicitor, and the business still continues as V.H. Tozer and Jeffery. Mr Graham Jeffery is the present principal of the firm.

The building on the left was occupied by Mining Secretaries and Stock Brokers, until the decline in mining forced their closure in 1919. Soon afterwards the building was purchased by the optometrist Mr W.J. Hodson, and is now owned by Mr Peter Goldsworthy, also an optometrist.

The extensive ornamentation, particularly of the building on the left, is typical of the period, and in each case a small vestibule inside the front door gives access through swinging glass doors to the interior. Iron grating in the pavement provides ventilation for the basement, while in each case a red cedar staircase leads to the upper floor.

The solicitor's building is practically unchanged from the original, while that on the left has been altered internally to suit modern professional needs.



The Stock Exchange Building

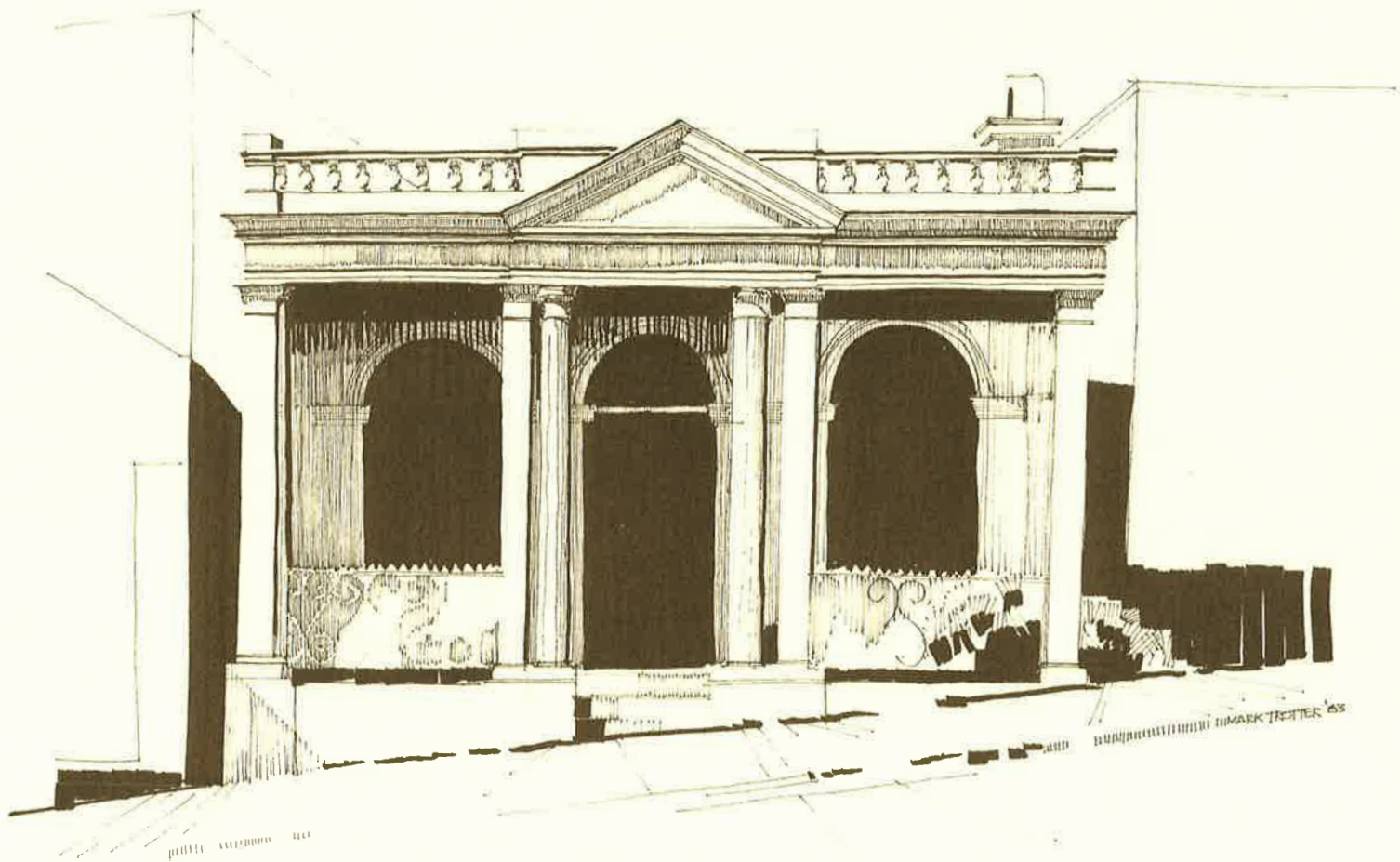
The Gympie Stock Exchange, nerve centre of the goldfield for 40 years, was one of the few exchanges found outside the capital city.

Erected in 1888 as the premises of the Australian Joint Stock Bank, the building was purchased by the Stock Exchange when the bank closed its doors in 1893.

The Stock Exchange offices and club were located in the building itself. The call room, however, was in a timber building at the rear, and access was by means of a narrow laneway to the left of the Exchange.

With the decline in mining, the Exchange was forced to close in 1923, and the premises came under the ownership of Mr F.B. Sykes. The firm of Neilson, Stanton and Parkinson occupies the building as solicitors.

Here is an instance where pride of ownership has preserved the building in perfect condition: the entrance has been retained in its original form, and only such internal alterations as were necessary for the efficient conduct of business have been made. The verandah and arched entrance and windows are typical, and are placed behind the classical facade so often used on the commercial and public buildings as a symbol of history and standing.



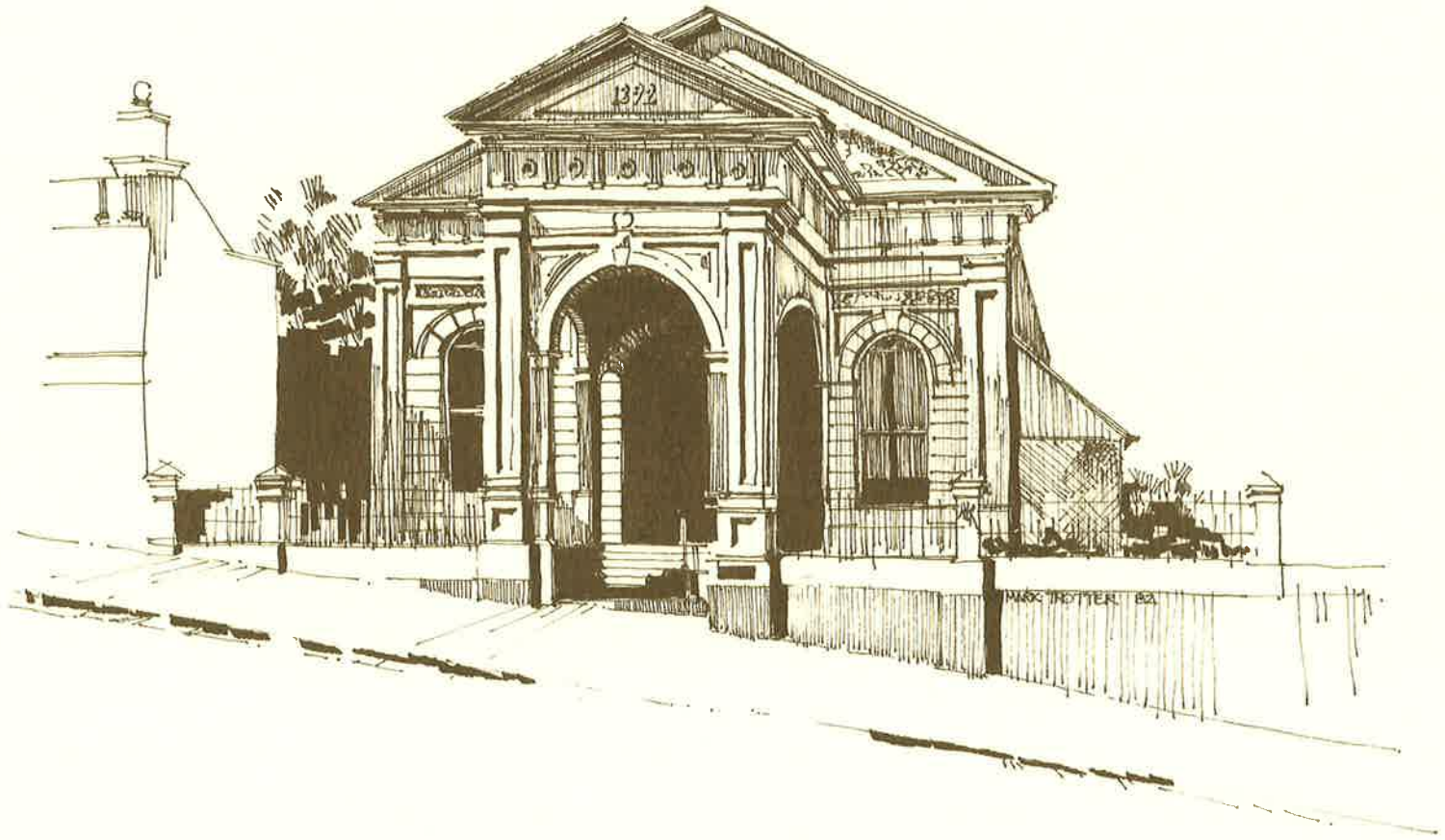
National Bank Building

Built in 1892 for the Royal Bank of Queensland, the building was used continuously as a bank until 1979, when the last occupier, the National Bank of Australasia, sold the premises to a firm of solicitors. The building is now owned and occupied by the solicitors Conroy and Elwing.

The building is of unusual design, with a large arched entrance porch on the street frontage. Access is by iron gates flanked by a concrete wall carrying ornamental iron work. On the southern side of the building is a low timber lattice verandah.

The internal fittings have been altered only to the extent required for the efficient conduct of business; the heavy cedar doors, architraves and fanlights having all been retained.

The whole concept constitutes one of the most attractive commercial buildings of the city.



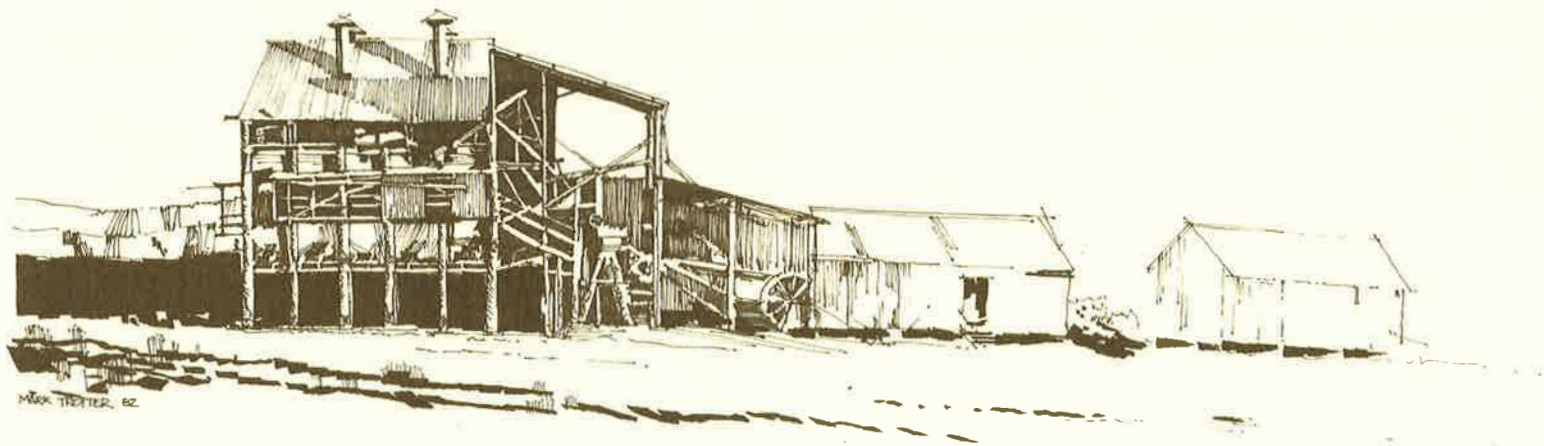
The City Council Stone Crusher

Wholly utilitarian in design and construction, the heavy industrial structure of this building is a fascinating study of light and shade at sunset.

The Gympie crusher's heavy timber frame, steeply pitched roof, rambling form, and crude but intricate detail provide an interesting record of industrial architecture of the past.

The rambling old structure has treated many thousands of tonnes of mullock, or waste stone, from the gold mines during its 40 years of service, reducing it to several grades of screenings for road surfacing, filling, and concreting.

There is usually a little gold remaining in the mullock, and many a "specimen" stone containing gold has been retrieved by sharp-eyed operators as it is fed into the crushing rollers. This small residue of gold is probably the origin of the saying that "Gympie's streets are paved with gold".



Public Buildings

Sketches by Dick Gould



*Gympie Hospital, built 1886
(Reproduced courtesy of the Gympie and District Historical Society)*



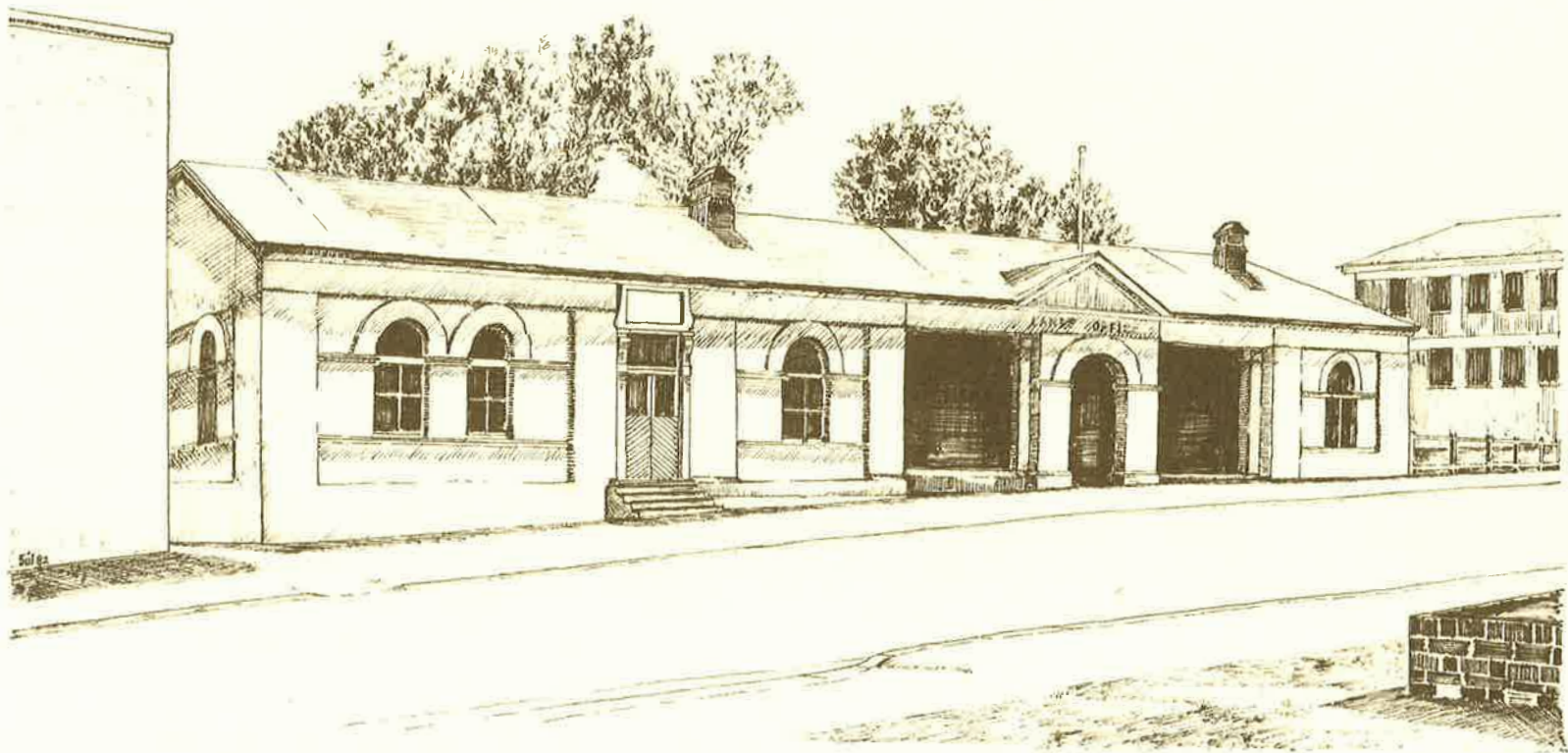
The Lands Office

Constructed in 1873, this was the first substantial public building erected on the goldfield, and despite constant complaints about the inadequacy of space and furnishings, it served as the Court House until 1901, when new premises were built.

Since 1901 the building has not only been used as the Lands Office, but has also housed other state government departments, including the Department of Forestry and the one-time State Savings Bank.

It is of brick construction, and is typical of the earliest type of Queensland single-storey buildings — with a wide low-level verandah, high, arched fanlights, and arches above rectangular doorways and windows. The casement-type windows belong to a much later period, indicating that they probably replaced original sash types.

The interior of the building has been altered extensively and bears no resemblance to the original.



The Court House

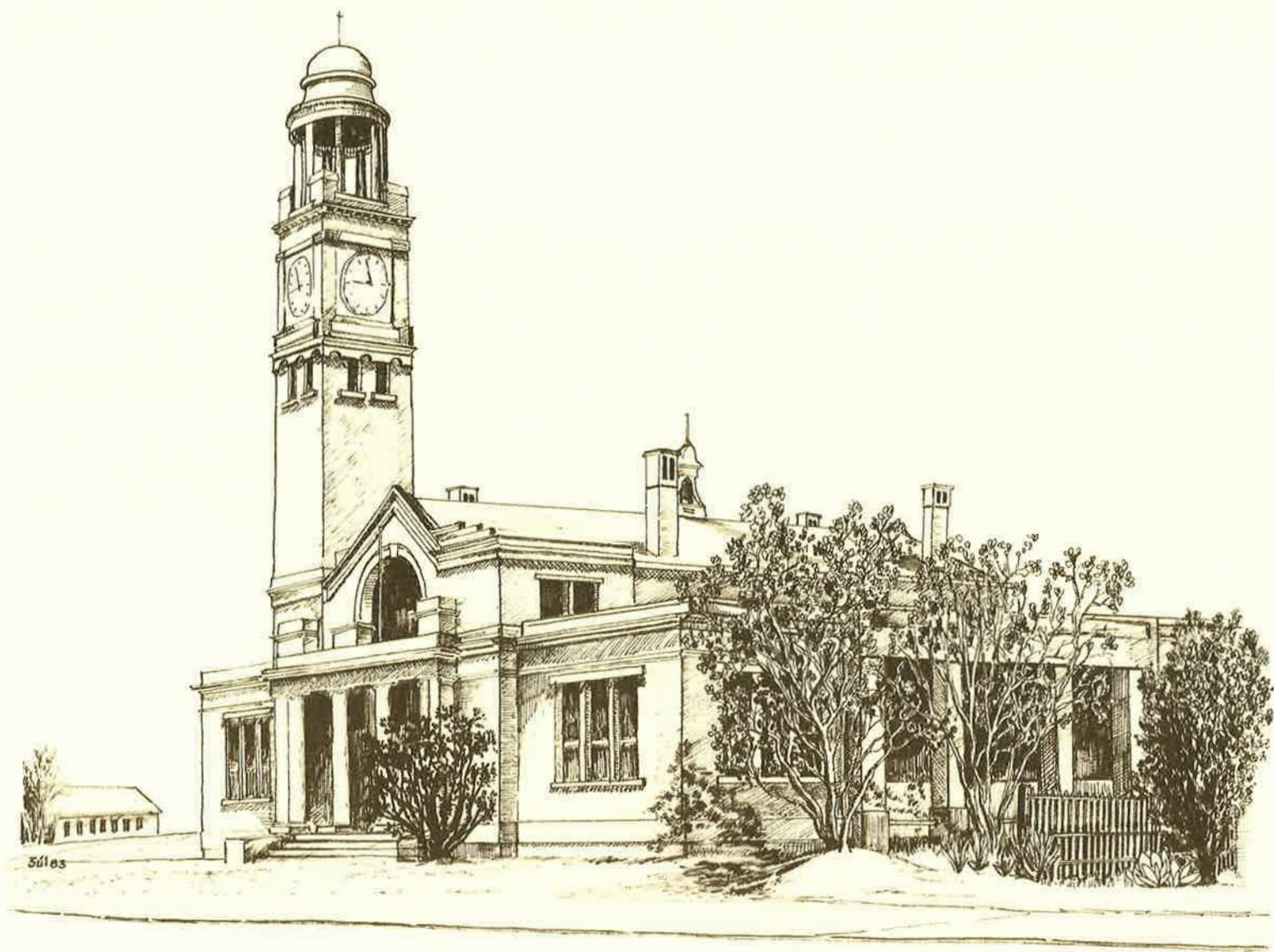
Designed by Mr A.P. Brady, Government Architect, the Court House was built in 1901-2 to replace an earlier building, now used as the Lands Office.

It is an imposing single-storey brick building with rendered trim, and with an impressive corner tower which is a major landmark in Gympie. There are public entrances on three sides, each entrance flanked by stone pillars, and, in keeping with the design of the building, windows are tall narrow sash-types. Above the front entrance there is an upper balcony with two flag poles.

The cost of constructing the new Court House was £6000. For many years, there was no clock in the tower, with the empty space being covered by white-painted louvres. The clock was added in 1945. The Court Room, with its original red cedar furniture, has not been altered in any way, but the office sections have been largely modernised.

This building is a fine example of its type, and combines with other government buildings nearby to form a streetscape of some significance.

The Court House has been listed by The National Trust of Queensland, signifying that it is considered worthy of preservation.



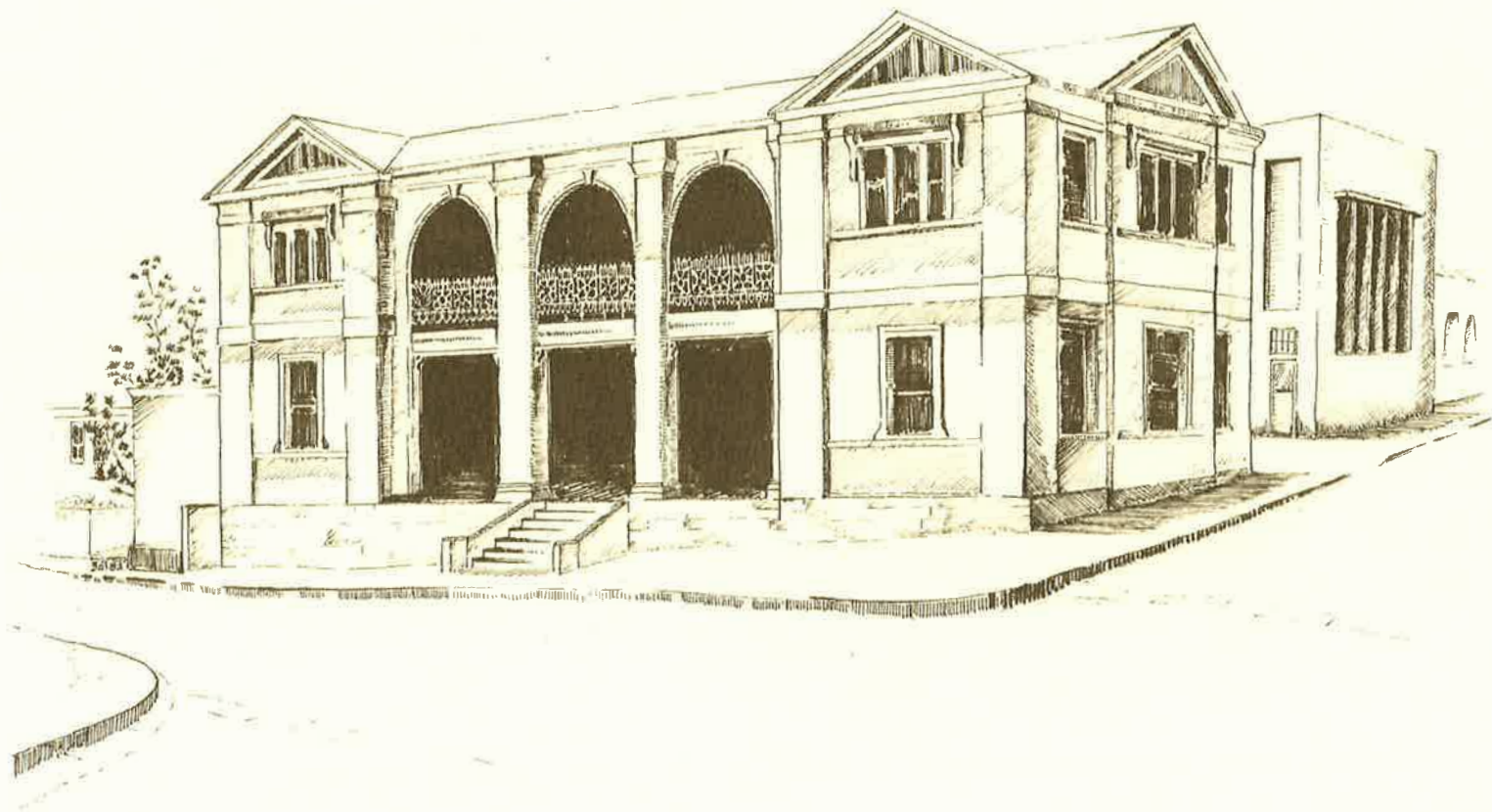
Old Post Office

Situated at the corner of Duke and Channon Streets, this public building was erected in 1879–80 and served as a Post Office until 1975. It is two storeys high, constructed of brick and concrete on a stone foundation, and features arches and iron lacework on the verandah at first floor level.

Before construction, it was the subject of much opposition from the South Gympie Progress Association, which felt that it should be located near the centre of the goldfield, rather than at the extreme northern end.

Few alterations have been made to the building itself since it was erected, other than the provision of a ramp to replace one half side of the original steps. In 1897 changes were made to the interior of the building and an addition constructed at the rear, to house a telephone exchange. In 1910 the Gympie Chamber of Commerce provided a 30 centimetre-dial clock in a polished cedar case above the main Post Office entrance doors.

The building has been added to the register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission, and is at present unoccupied.



The Town Hall

The Town Hall was built in 1890, the Mayor at the time being Mr Edward Bytheway, and it served the needs of the City Council until an annexe was added at the eastern or Caledonian Hill side in 1937-38.

Part of the ground floor of the annexe became the Gympie East Post Office for a time, until services were moved into the Commonwealth Office building nearby in 1967. The first floor of the annexe provides an auditorium.

Extensive internal alterations to both floors were carried out in 1982, and the auditorium was converted into a council meeting room.

Before the annexe was constructed, the City Council Works Depot was located behind the Town Hall in the area which is now a car park.

The Town Hall is located close to where the first gold was discovered in 1867, and at the Fiveways intersection nearby a granite memorial perpetuates the name of the goldfield's discoverer, James Nash.

The building is of rendered brick construction, and a feature is the massive clock tower, surmounted by an iron clad belfry.



St Patrick's Church

St Patrick's parish church, designed by the former Colonial Architect Mr F.D.G. Stanley, is a beautiful old building of Gothic design and mellowed by age.

St Patrick's was planned for many years, and finally erected by the efforts of Dean Matthew Horan, who was parish priest for 55 years from 1868 to 1923. The foundation stone was laid in January 1883, and the majestic edifice was ready for occupancy in 1885. An interesting feature of the structure is the use of locally quarried sandstone, obtained within a few kilometres of the site.

An addition at the sanctuary end was required to complete the church, and this was built in 1924-25 at a cost of £4000, making the total cost £20,000.

The parish is at present under the direction of Dr P. Kenny.



St Patrick's Primary School

Complementing St Patrick's Church is the adjacent primary school, through which many hundreds of pupils have passed in the more than 80 years since its foundation.

It is a grand, two-storey, masonry building, with wide shaded verandahs supported by slender timber posts. The present building replaced the original timber building on the same site. When completed in 1899, the attendance of pupils was placed at more than 600.

The church and school form part of an imposing complex which dominates the scene on the crest of Calton Hill, and provides a landmark visible from much of the city.



Surface Hill Church

The Surface Hill Uniting Church, spiritual home of many thousands since it was built almost a century ago, has been described as an imposing structure of mellowed stone.

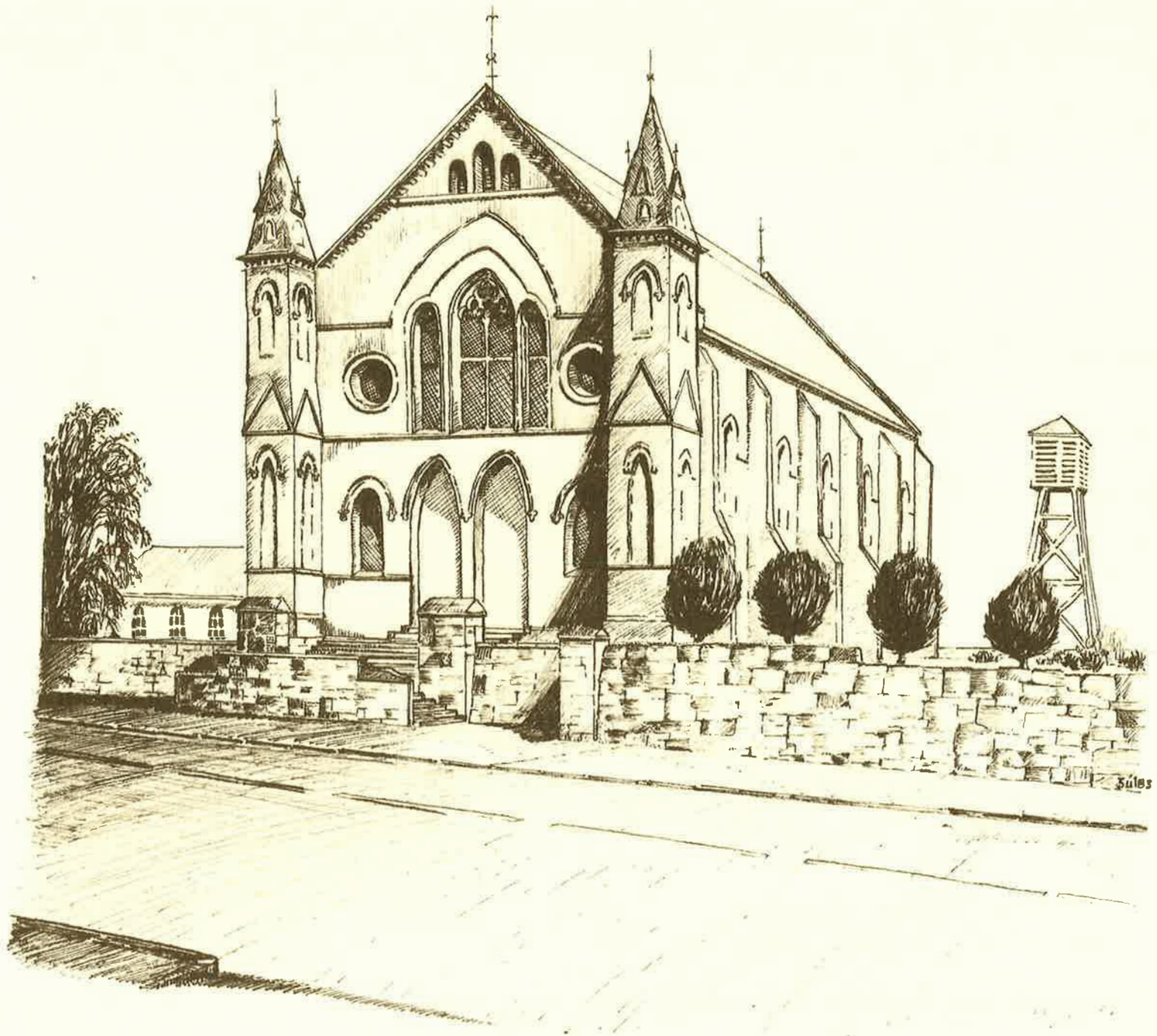
Originally it was the Methodist Church, and was erected during the ministry of the Rev. Thomas B. Holmes. The foundation stones were laid on 30 January 1890.

With its corner spires and steep roof, it is an outstanding landmark in the city.

This imposing structure is very different from the first church on the site — a humble church constructed of bark stripped from the neighbouring forest in 1868. It cost £53 to build!

That first church was followed by a more dignified chapel, opened 4 July 1869, and finally by the present church.

The front retaining wall of local sandstone was built during the Depression years 1935–36.



Widgee Shire Chambers

This building was erected for the Bank of New South Wales in 1890. In 1942 the premises were purchased by the Widgee Shire Council.

Of masonry construction with much ornamentation on the parapet, the building typifies the classical and renaissance style of design used by early Australian architects to symbolize the business and political status of such important commercial enterprises.

The manager's residence was upstairs, with access through a side entrance and up a wide cedar staircase. Extensive additions have recently been made to the lower side, and the furnishings and partitions have been extensively altered to cater for modern requirements.



The School of Arts

The School of Arts building, designed by local architect Hugo Durietz, was officially opened on 28 February 1905 and replaced the cramped premises in Mary Street occupied by the School of Arts and Mines since its foundation in 1871.

The budget cost was £1600, and with this limit in mind the architect designed a two-storey brick building of solid construction, his clever economies resulting in a simple, graceful structure which acknowledges the strong Queensland sun with wide, cool verandahs.

The building was erected on a concrete foundation, above which seven courses of bricks are laid in cement. The exterior walls are 35 centimetres thick. The verandahs of the upper floor are supported by tall slender timber posts, and internal access to the upper floor is by a cedar staircase.

Inside the front entrance doors is a further pair of swinging glass doors, controlling the westerly wind and the sunlight.

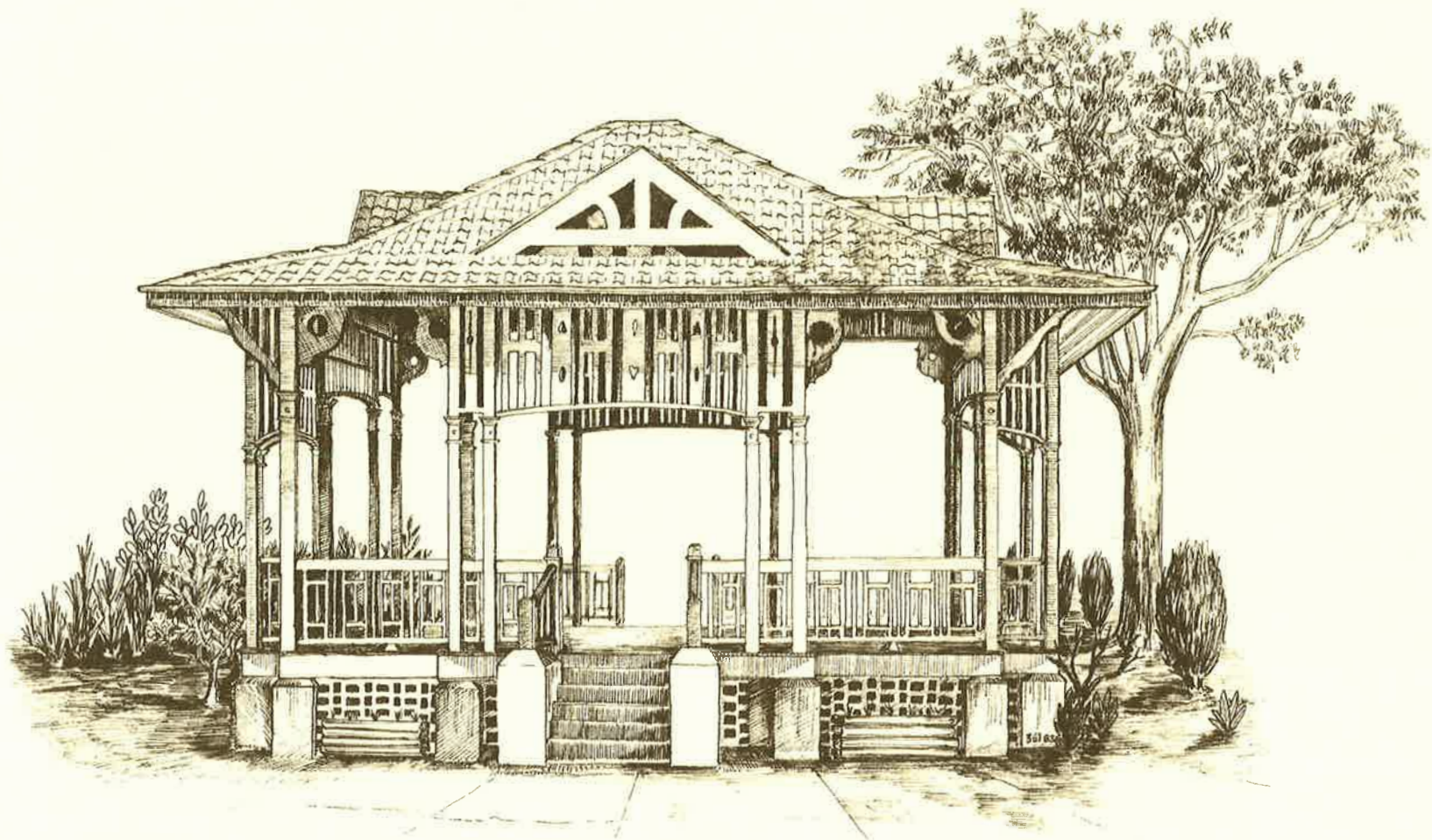
The School of Arts and Library continued almost unchanged for nearly 70 years, membership being by individual subscription. In 1977-78 the interior of the building was extensively altered to accommodate the modern Gympie Library, free of subscription and financed by the government and local authorities.



The Band Rotunda

A central feature of the Memorial Park is the band rotunda, erected in 1920. It is of timber construction on a brick and concrete foundation, with four gables protruding from a hipped roof clad in terracotta tiles.

Inscriptions state that it is dedicated to the memory of the fallen of World War I, and also to the memory of Mr F.T. Percival, noted band conductor from 1902 until 1907.

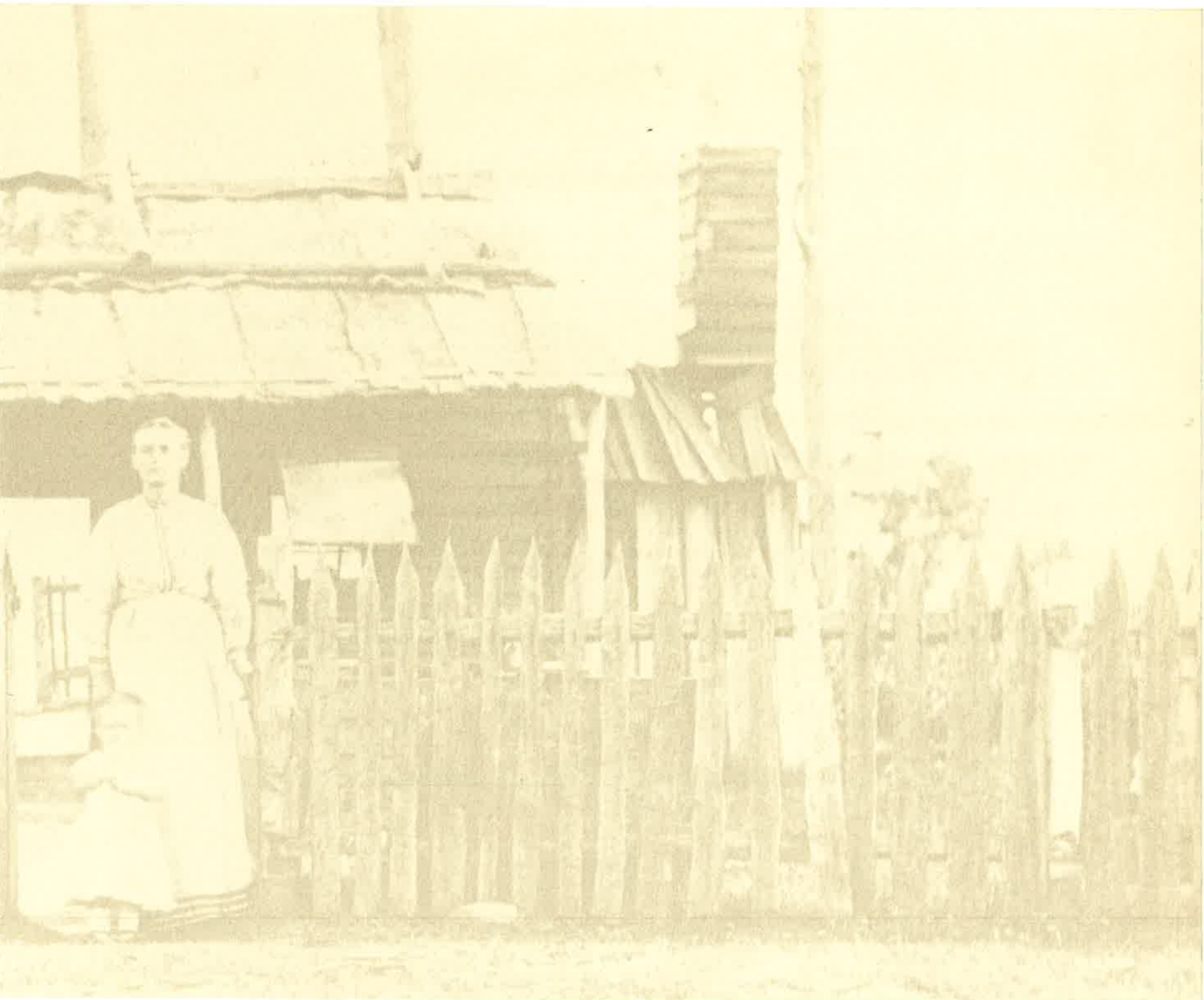


Dwellings

Sketches by Charlene Thompson Gould

*Gympie residence (unidentified), circa 1871
(Reproduced courtesy of the John Oxley Library)*





The Station Road Miner's Cottage

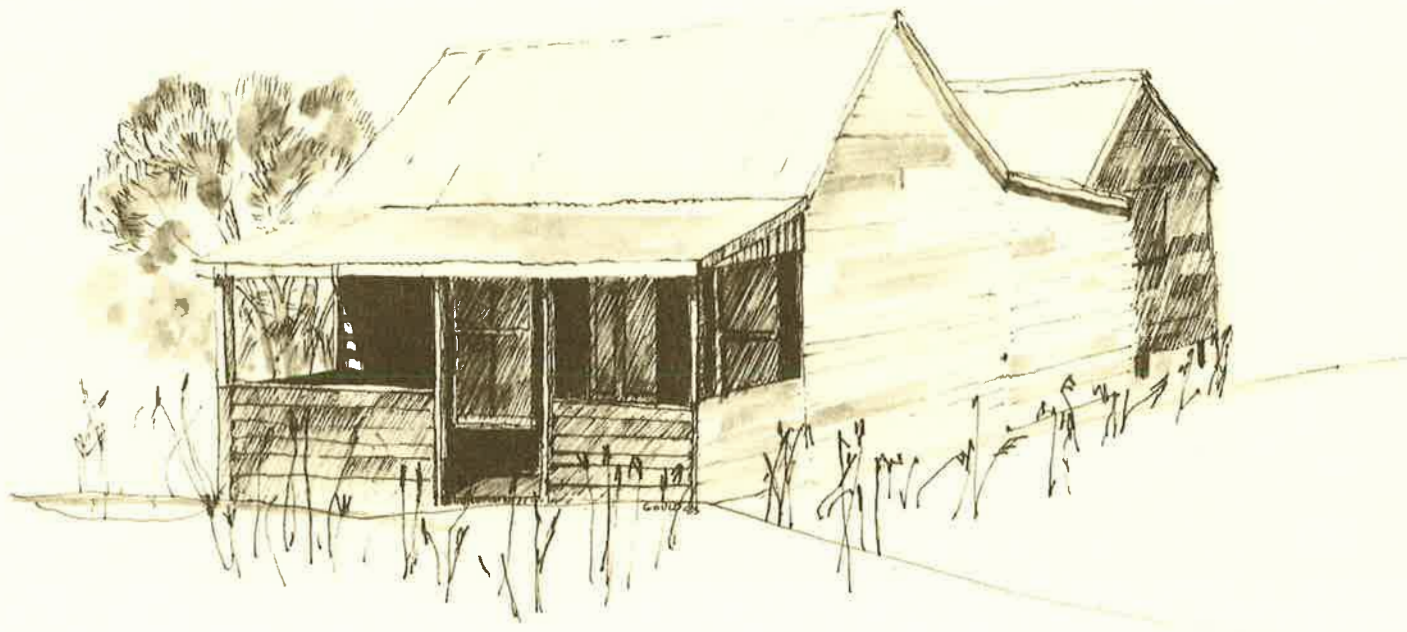
This small, weather-board, miner's cottage, dating from about 1871, is a survivor of the many similar cottages found throughout the goldfield a century ago. This particular example appears not to have been altered in any way, not even by the installation of electricity. Many years ago it was moved to its present site from its original location at Red Hill.

Cottages such as this one, with gable ends, galvanised iron roof, and low front verandah, were the cheapest form of substantial dwelling. In some cases the roof was covered by shingles, though galvanised iron was available soon after the goldfield was discovered. It is interesting to note that even in such a humble dwelling as this one, the verandah was considered essential for living in the Queensland climate, unlike the designs of modern-day counterparts.

In most cases walls were single, those protected by verandahs having exposed studs, and outside walls clad with weather-boards.

In this instance there is the now-rare detached kitchen, separated from the remainder of the house by a distance of just over a metre. In many cases the separation was six to nine metres, with a covered landing between the buildings. The reasoning behind a detached kitchen was to provide protection in case of fire at a time when wood-burning stoves were universally used.

The cottage is in poor condition, having been part of a deceased estate, and has not been occupied for some time. It was recently sold by the Gympie City Council for arrears of rates, and its future is uncertain.



The Andrew Fisher House

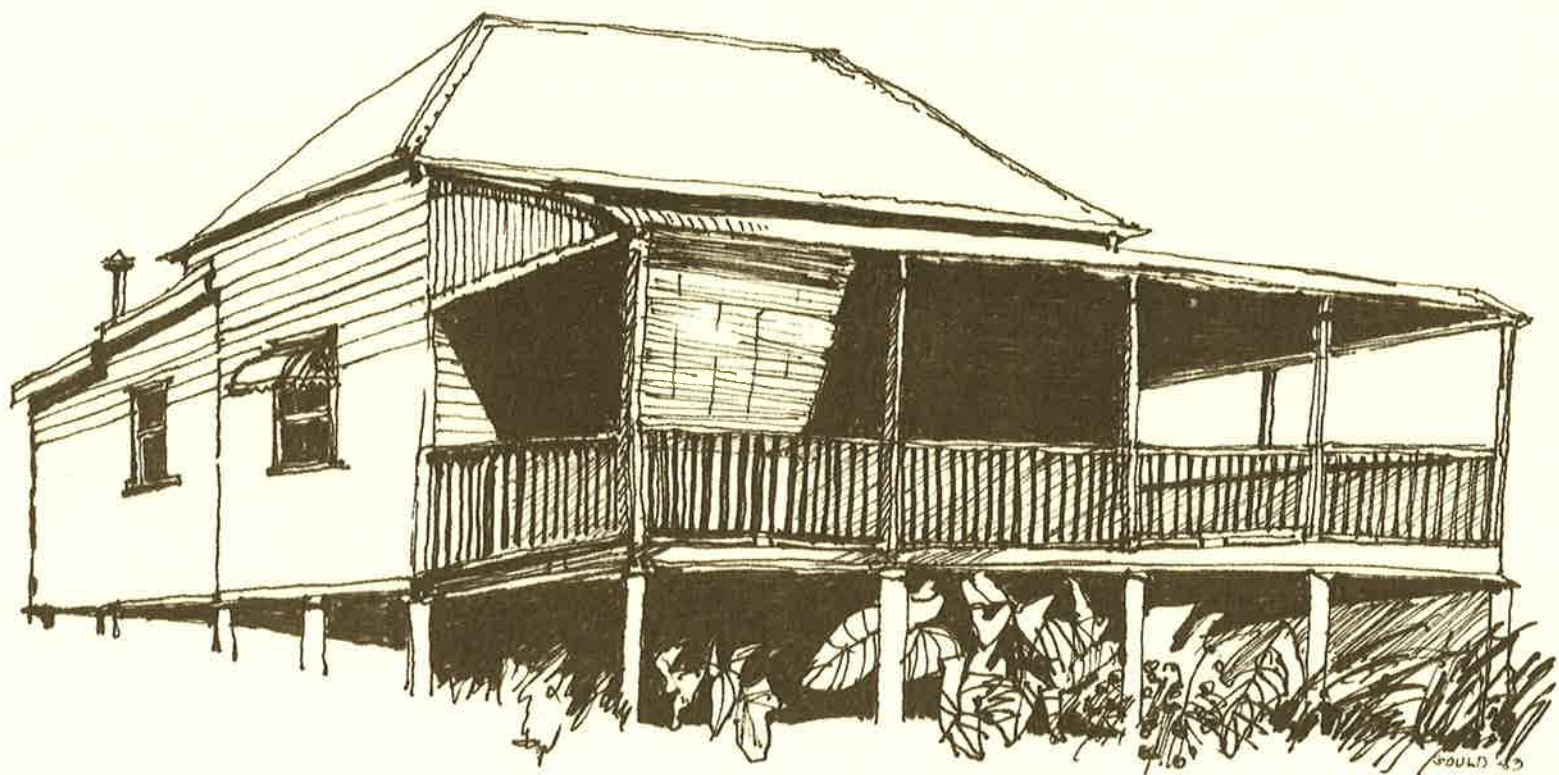
Built in about 1872, the Andrew Fisher house is typical of many dwellings of the early goldfield era. It was originally located in Maori Lane, Red Hill, and was moved in 1973 to the Museum Complex, where it has been restored and furnished in the style of the 1900s.

It is a simple dwelling of four rooms and a front verandah, with a side verandah added later. The frame is of hardwood, with pine partitions and ceiling, and single-skin walls. Some outside walls are clad in red cedar weather-boards; others have tongue and groove linings with exposed studs. The central portion is covered with a hipped roof, with curved bolted iron covering the verandah, and at the rear is a small covered landing. A recent alteration, for the convenience of the public, is a set of steps attached to the side verandah, where there had once been a water tank and stand.

The cottage is significant because of its association with Andrew Fisher, a Scottish migrant who worked as a miner at Burrum coalfield and later at Gympie as an engine driver in the gold mines, before becoming M.H.R. for Wide Bay and later Prime Minister of Australia. The cottage belonged to the Irvine family, with whom Fisher boarded for six years before marrying Margaret Irvine in January 1901.

After the wedding Mr and Mrs Fisher lived briefly at the cottage before travelling on holiday to Britain. By this time Andrew Fisher's parliamentary duties required his residence in Melbourne, but on several occasions when visiting his electorate, he and his family resided at the cottage.

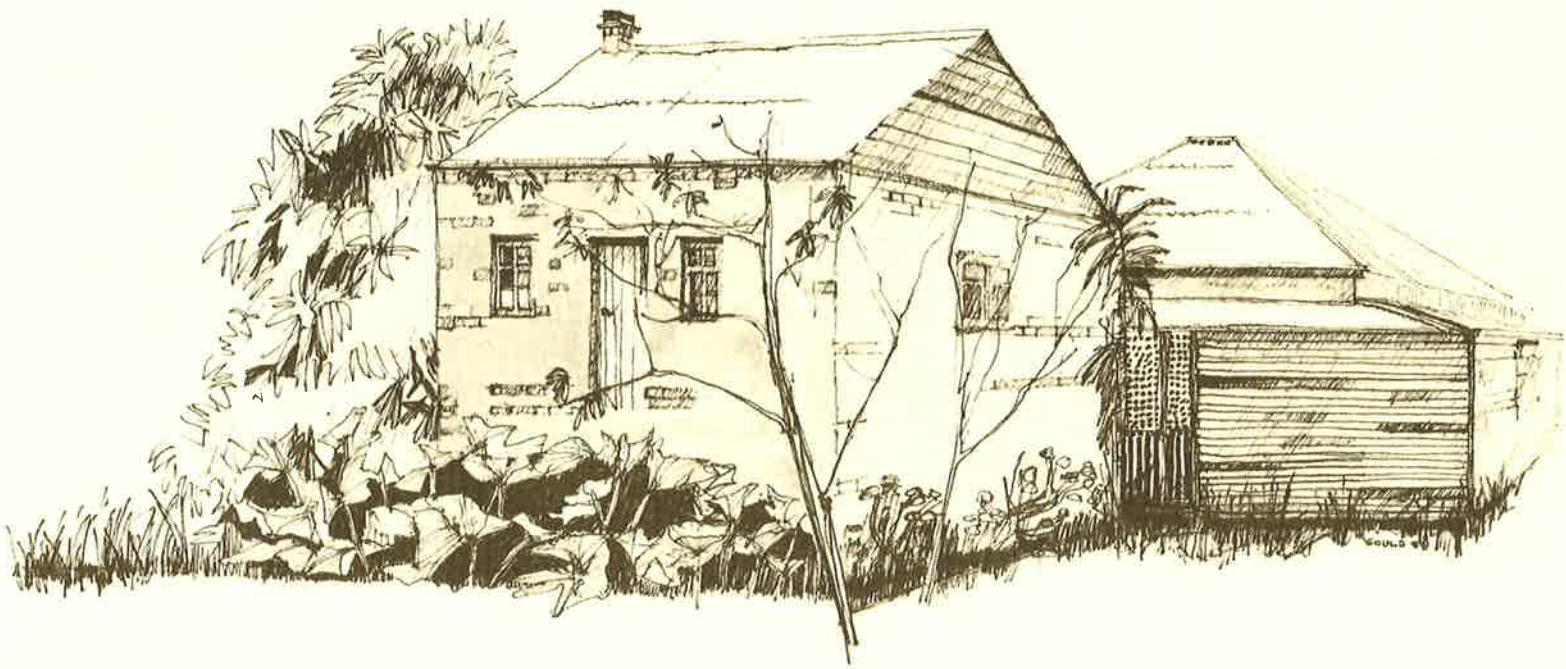
The Andrew Fisher house attracts much attention because of its historical background and associations, and it has been listed by the National Trust of Queensland.



Iron Street Cottage

Reputed to be one of the first two brick houses erected on the goldfield, this cottage was built in about 1870-71, using bricks made from clay obtained from a nearby gully. The peaked roof, covered with galvanised iron, appears to have replaced the original roof, which almost certainly was of shingles. The detached kitchen, with its gable ends, is typical of the style of the early goldfield years.

Two brick chimneys add to the charm of this very early home, as do the verandah and the gable roofed stables behind the house.



Calton Hill Residence

Originally the residence of Mr W.E. Burbidge, this is one of Gympie's earliest homes, built between 1880 and 1885.

Mr Burbidge was an assayer and analyst, who melted, refined and assayed gold almost throughout the life of the goldfield. His business premises were for many years located at Nashville, alongside the Phoenix P.C. Mine, now the site of the Widgee Shire Works Depot.

Mr Burbidge then moved to brick premises in Reef Street where he continued until mining on the Gympie goldfield virtually ceased.

As with almost all the other homes in the area, timber was used in the construction. An interesting feature of this particular residence is the observation platform atop the roof, whence an excellent view of the city is obtained. Ornamentation is provided by the scalloped fascia board, and each corner of the verandah is protected by wooden louvres. A later addition is the eastern portion of the house, dating from the beginning of the century.

The property is now owned by St Patrick's Parish.



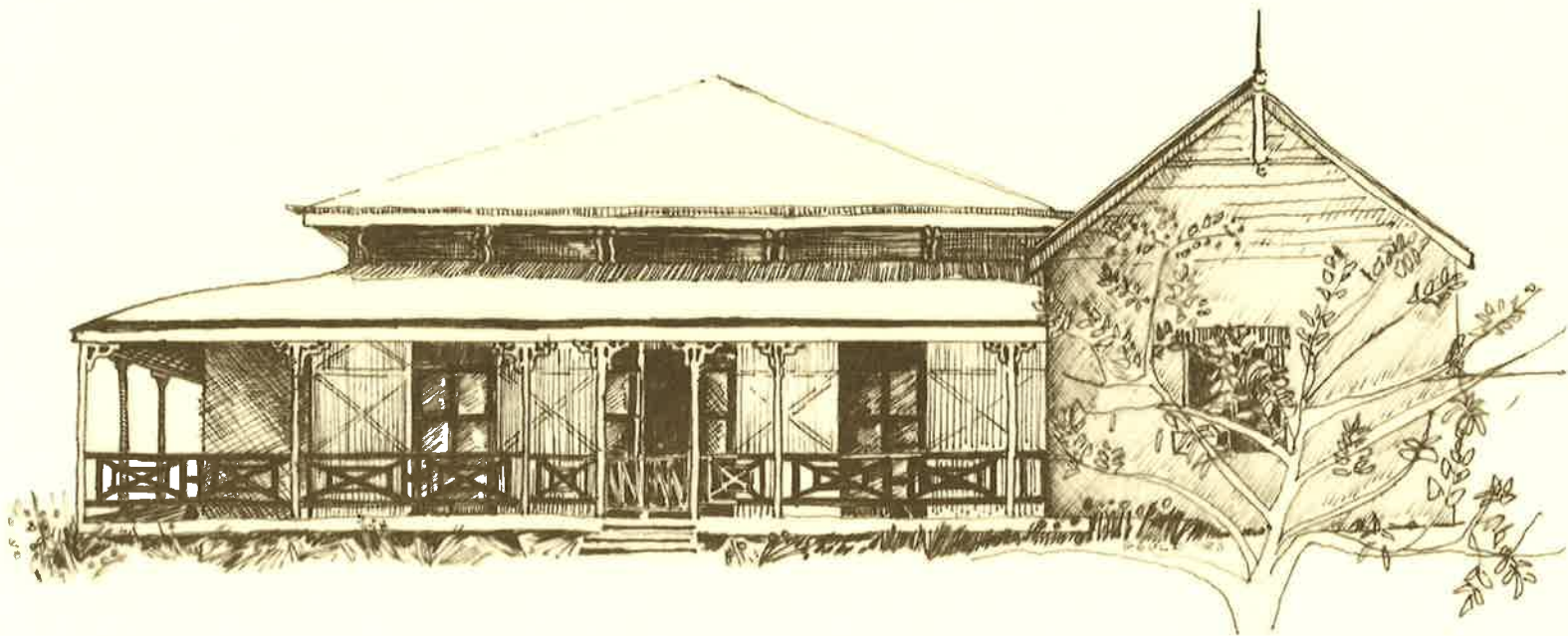
Old St Andrew's Rectory

St Andrew's Rectory at Mt Pleasant was built in 1888 after the Anglican parish was divided into two. The Rev. E.C. Osborn, a young clergyman from England, was appointed Rector of St Andrew's, and the result of his work remains in the fine rectory he built.

The rectory is located behind the site of the former Church of St Andrew, on the corner of Mt Pleasant Road and Graham Street. The church had been opened in 1877.

Built in the typical Queensland style, the old St Andrew's rectory is gracefully detailed with fretwork gable ends, window hoods, and criss-cross balustrading.

In 1968 the church and rectory were sold, the church was removed, and the rectory passed into private ownership. Original fittings and ornamentation have been retained as far as possible.

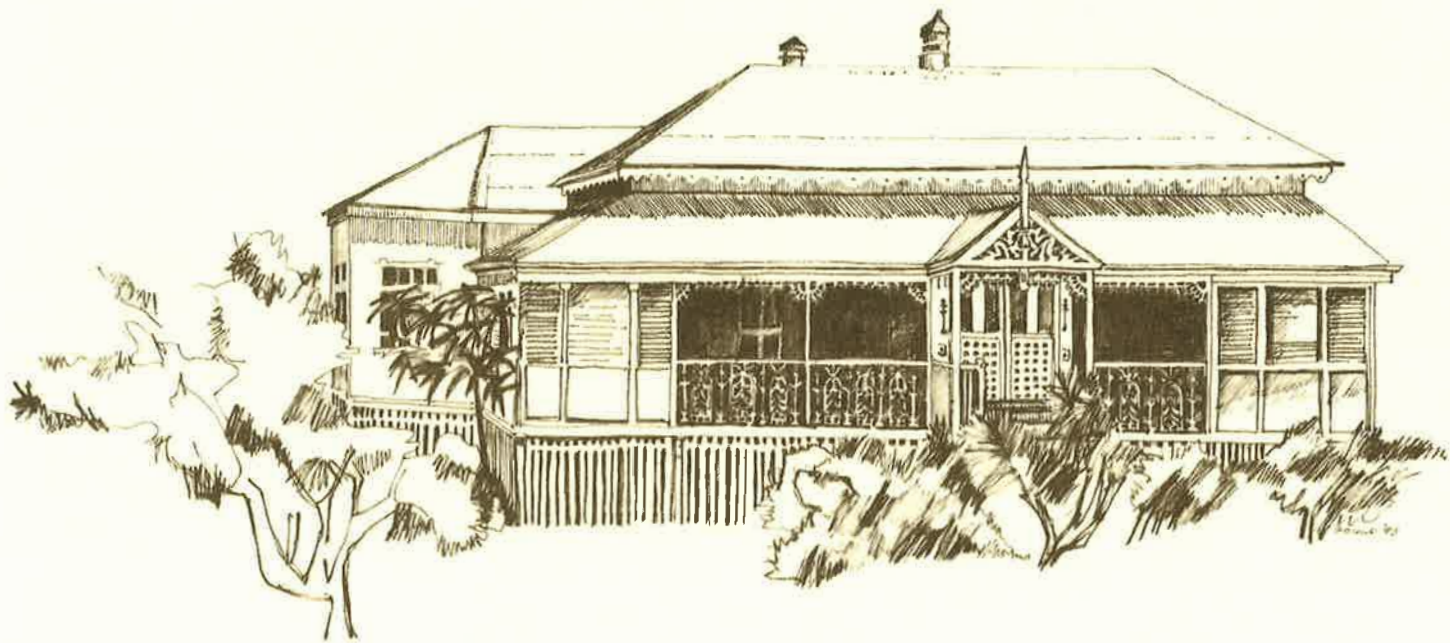


Cullinane House, Henry Street

Constructed at about the turn of the century by Mr Harry Cullinane, a partner in the firm of Cullinanes Ltd, this attractive old home was one of the premier residences in Gympie. Cullinanes Ltd was the oldest general merchandise business in Gympie, having shops on both sides of the main street, and continued as such until its closure in 1982.

The house is of timber construction, with wide chamfer-boards and much ornamentation. There are lattice doors at the entrance porch, and two ornate ventilators on the roof.

On the death of Mr Cullinane, the house was converted into self-contained flats.



Dr Cuppaidge's Residence

Built in about 1890 by Dr Cuppaidge, and owned and occupied by him for many years, this timber dwelling is one of the more ornate of the homes erected on the goldfield.

The wide verandahs are covered by curved bolted iron, and although they are now enclosed with casements and fibro cement, they were originally ornamented with cast iron lace. Several small gable ends jut from a hipped roof surmounted by ornamental cast iron lacework — all of which adds to the ornate appearance of the home.

A massive cedar door gives entrance to a wide hallway.



“Carinya”

The approach through an avenue of camphor laurels, obtained from the Brisbane Botanic Gardens at the turn of the century, together with jacarandas and silky oaks, is a striking feature of the home of Mr and Mrs J.C. Graham. Mrs Elizabeth Graham is Chairman of the Gympie Branch of the National Trust of Queensland.

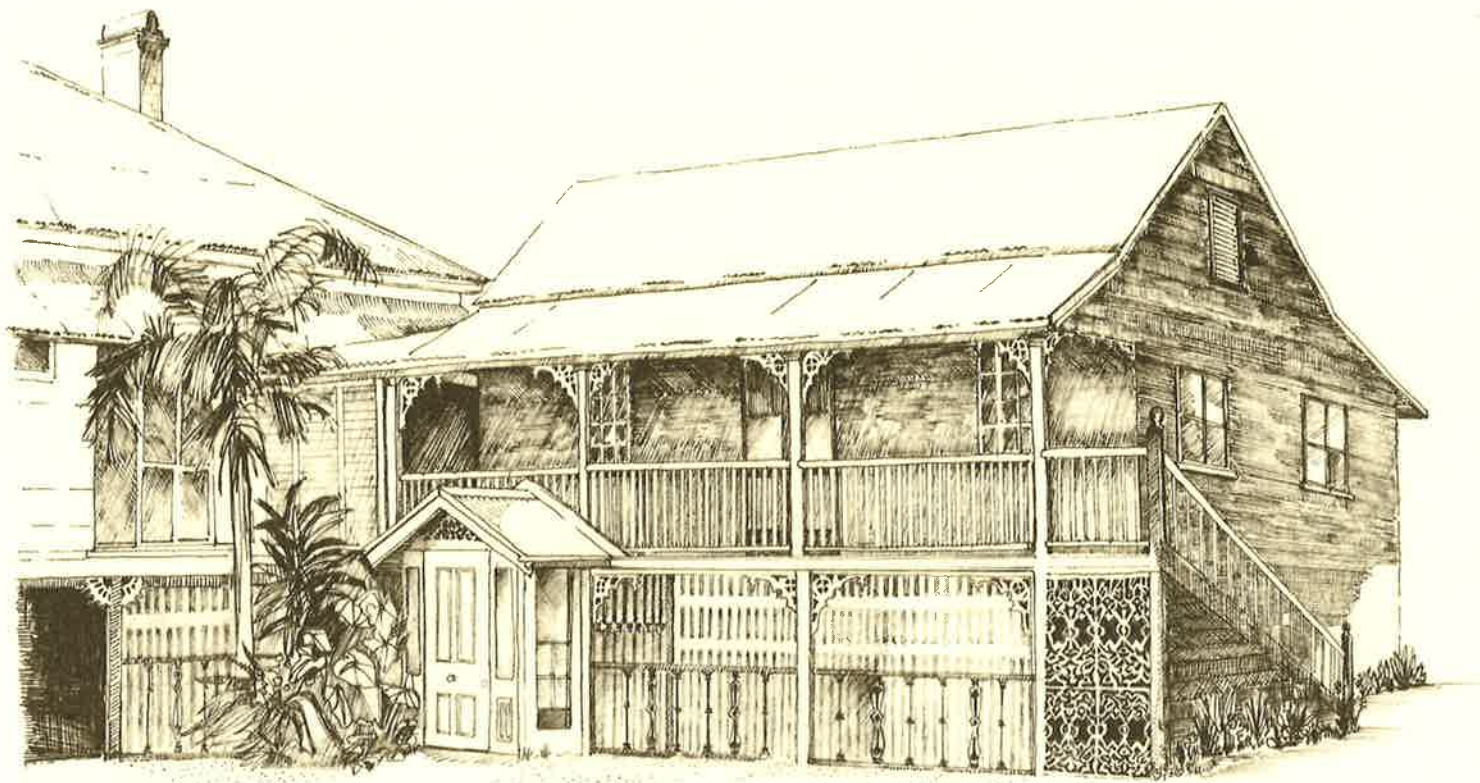
Originally named "Lornaville", the stately old home was built by Mr Alfred George Ramsey in 1898 on the high ground of his 40-hectare riverfront property.

"Lornaville" remained in the Ramsey family until 1965, when it was sold to dairying interests, and several years later its ownership passed into the hands of Mr and Mrs Graham. The new owners re-named it "Carinya", and have restored it to serve as an adjunct to their grazing interests.

"Carinya" is of timber construction on high stumps, and is typical in form and detailing of the very popular Queensland vernacular style. The interior is graced by wide cedar doors and fanlights surrounded by cedar architraves, while brick fireplaces provide for warmth in the colder months.

"Carinya" is located in Widgee Shire, and the wide front verandah provides sweeping views across the river flats to the Mary River and beyond to the city of Gympie.

Mrs Graham has extensively restored the home, and has endeavoured to preserve, wherever possible, the historical significance of the stately old building and its surroundings.



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William Edward Mulholland BEM was born and raised in Gympie. A retired farmer, he is President of the Gympie and District Historical Society and a foundation member of the Gympie Branch of The National Trust of Queensland. He was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1978. The citation reads:

W.E. Mulholland has contributed immensely to many civic and social programmes in the Gympie District, especially in the compilation of the history of the goldfields . . . He has devoted tremendous energy towards the establishment of the Gympie Mining Museum and Historical Society.

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Mark Trotter is a young Queensland architect with a particular interest in Australian vernacular architecture. He spent one year in Gympie and now lives on the Gold Coast.

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