

NEWSLETTER

of
MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC.

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society

ABN 34611778680

(Founded 11th June 1958)

PO Box 450 Muswellbrook NSW 2333

Editor: Lionel Ahearn.

No. 5 October 2019

Elias Gerson and Lyngarra Tannery

Recently I was looking through Trove seeking information on Robert Arthur Wauch of *Branga Park*, Walcha. I was directed to an article that stated he was selling fat bullocks at Eaton's Saleyards, Muswellbrook. While interesting for my research I noticed a small advertisement further down the column that had me intrigued – 'Lyngarra Tannery, having opened a tannery in Muswellbrook I will give highest price for good hides. E Gerson 1871'.¹

I thought my knowledge of Muswellbrook history, especially the period up to 1900 was reasonably comprehensive, but I had never heard of the Lyngarra Tannery or E Gerson. Naturally, I had to find more – this is his story, which I have to state is incomplete.

A check of Key Name Search, showed an Elias Gerson with two entries, naturalisation 1885 and charged with larceny at Uralla 1863. Was this the same E Gerson of Muswellbrook? Gerson is not a very common name so I assumed it was. A check of his naturalisation showed he arrived in Australia in 1856 per *Bigapore* and was 50 years of age when naturalised giving a birth of 1825 and 21 years of age when he arrived.² He gave his native place as Poland Russia, which meant he had been born in the area taken over by Russia during the partitioning of Poland in the 18th century. It appears Gerson may have provided the wrong name for the ship he arrived on or he could not pronounce it. No ship can be found with the name; *Bigapore*.

Gerson was in Sydney in 1857 as he donated £2 to the Sydney Infirmary.³ Next, the *Government Gazette* listed an unclaimed letter for E Gerson of Inverell,⁴ in 1862 he was back in Sydney as he married Clara Soares, this most likely took place late 1861 or early 1862 as it has a low registration number.⁵

In 1863, he is in Uralla where his employee, James Carroll was charged with stealing from him. At the trial, Gerson gave his place of abode as Uralla though it appears he may have been a travelling hawker.⁶ In November 1863, Gerson was charged with stealing, but he was honourably acquitted with the judge remarking that 'his character was unstained by the trial.'⁷ On 28 May 1864, the *Armidale Express* listed him as donating 5s to Armidale and New England Hospital.

DETAILS ABOUT THE SOCIETY

Objectives:

- To collect, preserve and promote the social, cultural and physical history of Muswellbrook Shire, its environs and its people for future generations.
- to promote public access to our collections and research facilities, and
- to provide information, advice and assistance to individuals, community groups, organizations and businesses.

Meetings

The Society meets on the third Tuesday of each month starting at 7.00 in the Society Room at the rear of the Muswellbrook Library. All members and visitors are welcome to attend the meeting and stay for a cuppa, biscuit & a chat after.

Premises

The Society maintains its records in a section of Muswellbrook Library. You will find us at the rear of the Library. The Research Centre is open every Saturday from 9.30am to 1.00pm. The Research Centre may be opened at other times by appointment. Bus & tour groups are most welcome.

Annual Fees

Single \$25 Double \$35 Pensioner Single \$15 Pensioner Double \$25

The Hon Secretary may be contacted via the post office box or email mei2@bigpond.com The Society also has a web presence thanks to Darrin Khan and Lionel Ahearn at <http://www.mbkhistorical.org> and a research site at <http://research.mbkhistorical.org>

¹*Maitland Mercury* 6 May 1871

² State Archives, Naturalisation Reel 135 p.426

³*SMH* 14 July 1857

⁴*Government Gazette* 6 July 1860

⁵ NSW BDM Marriage 1862/566

⁶*Armidale Express* 22 August 1863

⁷*Maitland Mercury* 26 November 1863

By mid 1864, Elias Gerson was living at 129 South Head Road, Sydney. He advertised for a boy to look after a horse and be useful. Gerson also appeared at the court case of Charles Smith who had presented a bad cheque. Gerson's occupation was given as clothier at the time of the court case.⁸

Gerson appeared to have difficulty settling in an area. 1867 the Singleton Bench granted him an auctioneer's license and in January 1868 he was in Singleton operating as a storekeeper; July 1868 he still had an auctioneer's license for that area.⁹

In 1869, the *Maitland Mercury* reprinted an article from the *Monitor*:

In the neighbourhood of the railway station substantial buildings are rapidly springing up, and in a few weeks there will be a long and busy street, where two months ago there was nothing but a bare field. We hear of a further immigration expected from Singleton. Two wheelwrights are about to bring their implements and machinery along to commence business with us and for one of them a substantial building is at present in course of erection at the rear of the Wesleyan Chapel, in Bridge Street. The store lately vacated by Mr Goulston, in Sydney Street has not been long without a tenant, Mr E Gerson, late of Singleton, having rented the building, where we understand it is his intention to hold periodical auction sales on fixed days, for the convenience of persons at a distance; besides carrying on the business of a forwarding agent.¹⁰

Gerson appears as the plaintiff in Muswellbrook's Small Debts Court in October 1869 and January 1870, he won both.¹¹ The Muswellbrook Municipal Rate books show that E Gerson was renting a store in Sydney Street from John H Brown. The store would have been near the Workers' Club carpark.

On 18 March 1871, the *Maitland Mercury* announced that Elias Gerson had opened a tannery in Muswellbrook and would offer the highest prices for good hides. A week later, it was mentioned that the Lnygarra Tannery of E Gerson was in the grounds of the Lnygarra Wool-washing establishment of PW Wright. Wright's property occupied four acres of land in Sydney Street about a mile from town.¹² Phillip Wentworth Wright had purchased the four acres from George Bowman of Richmond in 1867 for £400.¹³

Advertisements for Gerson's tannery appeared in the *Maitland Mercury* periodically: September 1871 – now ready to receive orders in the leather trade; January 1872 – wanted, wattle bark and curriers; March 1872 – can supply all kinds of leather, trade, wholesale or retail. In April 1872, Gerson announced he had started manufacturing boots and the following month, glue. On 7 November 1872, the *Maitland Mercury* informed readers that E Gerson of Muswellbrook required 50,000 pelts and 1000 hides for his tannery, the *SMH* 20 December 1872 stated that E Gerson of the Botany Tannery, Sydney required staff.

1872, was the last reference to Elias Gerson in Muswellbrook, from then he appears at various addresses in Sydney conducting businesses related to the leather trade. The *SMH*, 10 June 1890 advertised that there would be an auction of 150 pairs of books on account of E Gerson who was retiring.

Elias Gerson died 19 November 1912 at the Rookwood Asylum (hospital for aged and infirm) and was buried the following day in the Jewish Cemetery, Rookwood. He left a widow, Clara Soares, but there were no children.¹⁴ She lived until 14 August 1918 and was buried in the Jewish Cemetery, Rookwood.¹⁵

This is the story of Elias Gerson and the Lyngarra Tannery – another part of Muswellbrook's fascinating history.

RBT

Our thanks to Rob Tickle for this article. It is surprising how much information comes to light unexpectedly when researching other topics.

⁸*SMH* 8 July 1864 & 6 July 1864

⁹*Maitland Mercury* 5 September 1867, 18 January 1868 & 20 June 1868

¹⁰*Maitland Mercury* 3 Aug 1869

¹¹*Maitland Mercury* 19 Oct 1869 & 1 Jan 1870

¹²*Maitland Mercury* 6 December 1871

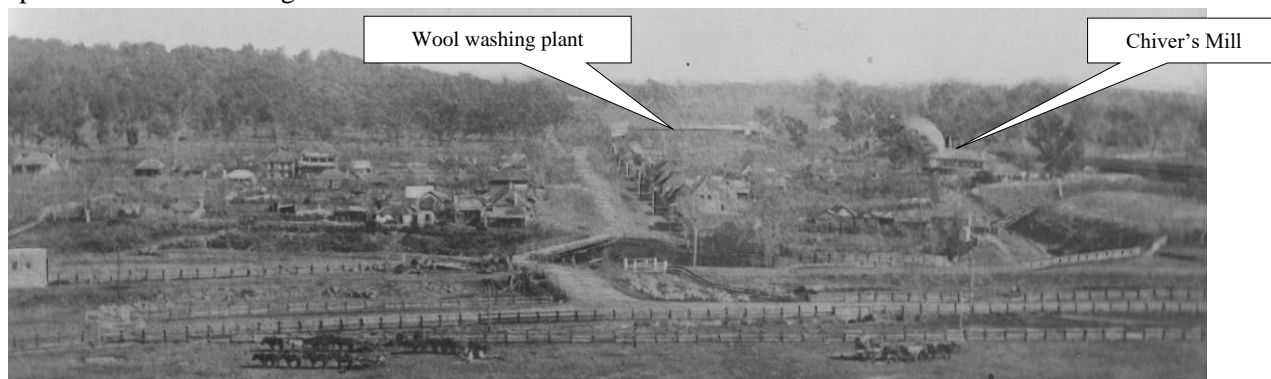
¹³LTO 7 May 1867 Bk 103 No. 933

¹⁴NSW BDM Death 1912/15785

¹⁵NSW BDM Death 1918/8775

One Photo – Many Stories

A number of Society members have been helping Margaret Ashford in the preparation of the Writings of Mac Bridge into a book to be launched under the title 'Life in the Upper Hunter - Mac Bridge Remembers'. In his writings he mentions Chivers Mill. It was decided to use the photo below as it shows Chivers Mill, (centre right) with a plume of steam coming from it.



Society photo 1304

A discussion on the date of this photo led to a close examination of an enlarged version which showed no railway line. This was further confirmed by Bill Spicer who provided a report from his story 'Over the Bridge and through the Gate'. A new straight bridge in line with Sydney Street was completed about the time of the arrival of the railway. As there is no sign of the new bridge the photo was taken before 1869.

Rob Tickle's article above 'Elias Geron & Lyngarra Tannery' notes that the tannery was in the grounds of the P W Wright wool washing establishment.

On 18 March 1871, the *Maitland Mercury* announced that Elias Gerson had opened a tannery in Muswellbrook and would offer the highest prices for good hides. A week later, it was mentioned that the Lnygarra Tannery of E Gerson was in the grounds of the Lnygarra Wool-washing establishment of PW Wright. Wright's property occupied four acres of land in Sydney Street about a mile from town.¹⁶ Phillip Wentworth Wright had purchased the four acres from George Bowman of Richmond in 1867 for £400.¹⁷

Rob noted that in the above photo the long white building on the edge of town (Right of Sydney Street) is almost certainly the Wool Washing establishment.

At the Muswellbrook Show earlier this year a book entitled 'Muswellbrook Show – snippets from the first 140 years' also mentions the Wool Washing Establishment.

The Association has been very fortunate in purchasing the buildings of Mr. Wright's wool washing establishment, which supplied them with Material for two pavilions and some to a gate. The show pavilion is 70 feet long by 28 feet wide, and about 14 feet high from the floor to the wall-plate.

Maitland Mercury, Tuesday 15 Feb, 1876.

As far as I can determine the photo above is the only photo in the Society collection which shows Wright's Wool Washing Establishment. The photo below shows the old showground with the pavilion and the animal shelters which were constructed from it.



Society Photo 0569.05

¹⁶*Maitland Mercury* 6 December 1871

¹⁷ LTO 7 May 1867 Bk 103 No. 933

Book Launch

Life in the Upper Hunter – Mac Bridge Remembers

On Saturday, 23rd November at 2.00 pm the Society will be launching the book shown in the flyer.

Afternoon tea will be provided. Members are asked to bring a plate of goodies as they have in the past.

Please invite friends and family. This book provides an interesting insight to life in the Upper Hunter in the early days. Much of his writing brought back memories of my early life when growing up in Aberdeen. I'm sure you will find the book well worth the good read it will provide.

As mentioned in the flyer we will take preorders which may be collected on the day or posted.

Society visit to Denman Heritage Museum & Men's Shed

On Sunday, 22nd September a number of Society Members, their friends and families visited the Denman Heritage Museum shed next to the Denman Men's Shed. The facilities of the Men's Shed were made available for us and we were able to partake of an enjoyable afternoon tea which as usual was provided by our members.



The inside of the Heritage Display building where a wonderful collection of memorabilia from days gone by were on display.

Jeff Wolfgang was only too happy to explain and to also demonstrate many of the more unusual items.

Some of the visitors found that they had information to add to what was already known.

We were also shown plans of the new larger shed which hopefully will be built in the near future.

New Members to the Society:

Andrew Simpson of Richardson, ACT. - Jan Adams, Muswellbrook. NSW. - Annette Ferguson, Manly. NSW

Birthday Congratulations:

Congratulations to Jenny Wall celebrating her 80th birthday this week. We wish you good health and many more.

Get Well Wishes:

The Society sends get well wishes for a speedy recovery to our member Bruce James who is recovering from an operation.

Muswellbrook Shire
Local and Family History Society
invites you to a

BOOK LAUNCH

"Happenings in the districts of Scone, Aberdeen, Muswellbrook, Bowman's Creek, Ravensworth, Maitland, Jerry's Plains, Denman, Merriwa, Murrurundi and Rouchel"

"Written from memory except where otherwise stated"

To be launched by
Geoff Harrison, well-known local author and former resident of the Rouchel area

Life in the Upper Hunter:
Mac Bridge Remembers

Saturday 23rd November 2019 at 2:00 pm

Muswellbrook Library
Seminar Rooms (downstairs, entrance from car park)

Afternoon tea is provided and books are available for purchase

Contact the Society to preorder and pick up at the launch or to have a copy mailed
mei2@bigpond.com

The great facilities of the Denman Men's Shed where we were made most welcome by Jeff Wolfgang on behalf of their members.

A view of some of the items being made and other vintage items that were being restored in the shed were of interest to all.

