

## THE RAILWAY/CAMBRIDGE HOTEL AND BUSHMAN'S HOME

The Railway Hotel, later known as the Cambridge Hotel, stood as a prominent two-story brick building on Hope Street, Bourke, between Glen and Wilson Streets, from 1884 until its delicensing in 1906 and then its demolition in 1963. In its heyday, the hotel was at the centre of a bustling area, surrounded by the Cobb & Co factory, the Club House Hotel, and the East End Store. Its position near a large parking area for bullock teams made it a popular destination for travellers, railway workers, and teamsters. However, the fortunes of the hotel ebbed and flowed with the town's economy, leading to its decline and eventual closure.

The hotel opened its doors in 1884, with **Thomas Glover** serving as its first licensee. He was succeeded by **William Deignan** in 1886, as the Railway Hotel began to attract a regular clientele of travellers and locals alike. In 1888, **James Lynch** took over the license, overseeing the hotel during a memorable incident when a thief attempted to pickpocket a boarder named Mr. Mullens. The thief was caught and given a harsh beating, leaving behind his coat and hat, never to return. It was said he was a notorious spieler from Sydney.

In 1890, **William Quinn** took charge of the Railway Hotel. That same year, the hotel became the venue for a critical meeting of the Carriers' Union, where the ongoing camel transport controversy was debated. Local teamsters, who were the hotel's frequent patrons, strongly objected to camel carriage due to the camels' frightful effect on horses and their use of alien labour. The union passed a resolution prohibiting any merchant who dealt with camel carriers from trading with its members. Unfortunately, Quinn's fortune soon went into a downturn. After suffering damages from the 1890 flood, he was declared bankrupt in 1891.

**Alexander Barry**, who had a storied past as a police officer involved in the capture of the bushranger Captain Moonlite, took over the hotel in 1891. Barry's time as a licensee was marked by both tragedy and controversy. In December 1891, a seven-year-old girl named Lilian Smith accidentally consumed brandy and tragically died at the hotel, casting a shadow over his tenure. Barry was also fined for illegally trading on a Sunday, and his son was injured in a gunpowder explosion that same year. Barry in 1892 moved to the newly constructed Half-Way Hotel.

In 1892 the licensee was **Thomas Hand** who after two years moved next door to the Club House Hotel. He was followed by **Percival Whittaker** in 1894 who later moved to the Commercial Hotel in 1895.

In 1895, **Samuel Charles Davis** became the licensee and changed the name to Cambridge Hotel. During his term, a tragic accident occurred in the railway yard near the hotel. Edward Broderick, a 22-year-old railway shunter, and hotel lodger had his right leg amputated after a shunting operation went awry. Broderick slipped while attempting to jump onto an engine, and the wheel of the train ran over his leg, necessitating an emergency amputation. Dr. Kane, who happened to be nearby, quickly attended to the young man and had him taken to the Cambridge Hotel, where the amputation was performed. The accident sent shockwaves through the community and highlighted the dangers of railway work in Bourke at the time. Davis was well known in Bourke as the previous licensee of the Royal Hotel and then after the Cambridge Hotel, he spent time in the Central Australian and Empire Hotels.

Following Davis, the Railway Hotel saw a succession of licensees, each contributing to the hotel's colourful history:

**Thomas Green** (1898-1901) presided during a period of slow decline as the Federation Drought hit Bourke, leading to the closure of the Cobb & Co factory and the East End Store. The teamsters were practically gone, broken by the drought and the hardy camels. By the late 1890s, the once-thriving Hope

Street area was turning into a ghost town. The Cobb & Co factory suffered a disastrous fire in 1895 and then later was destroyed by another fire in 1908.

During Green's time, a bizarre accident occurred in November 1901. A lodger named Mr. G. White, who was staying in one of the upstairs rooms, fell over the balcony while sleepwalking. Although his injuries were serious, they were not life-threatening, adding a peculiar chapter to the hotel's history. Thomas Green in 1902 moved next door to the Club House Hotel as the new licensee following the death of Thomas Hand.

**Edward Charles Davis** (1902) and **William Heuston** (1903) followed, but the fortunes of the hotel continued to wane.

**William Chapman** (1904-1905) oversaw the final years of the hotel's operations as a licensed venue.

**John Wade** (1906) was the last licensee before the Cambridge Hotel's doors were closed for good as a public house.

After being delicensed in 1906, the hotel briefly operated under the name Cambridge Hotel before it was sold and transformed into a boarding house in 1912. Samuel and Mrs. Conroy purchased the building and transferred the name of their existing Sturt Street boarding house, the "Bushman's Home," to the former hotel. The building, now catering to long-term lodgers, struggled with storm damage in 1915, 1938, and 1942. Despite repairs, the structure continued to deteriorate over time.

In 1950, Jim McGregor purchased the old hotel and used part of it as a grocery shop until 1955, when he built a new shop alongside. By then, the Bushman's Home had become little more than a shell of its former glory, and the aging building was finally demolished in 1963.

The Railway/Cambridge Hotel remains a symbol of Bourke's fluctuating fortunes, reflecting both the town's vibrant past and its struggles during economic downturns. From its heyday as a bustling stop for travellers and teamsters to its final days as the dilapidated Bushman's Home, the hotel's history is a testament to the resilience of the community and the ever-changing tides of progress in outback New South Wales.



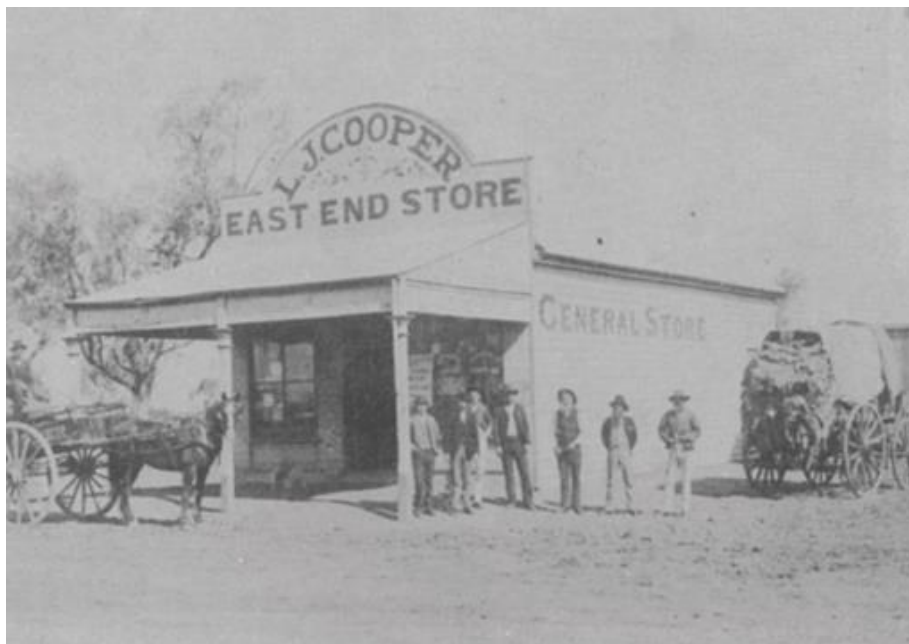
**The Railway Hotel in 1890**



**The Rear of the Bushman's Home Hotel after the devastating 1915 Storm**



**Photo of Bullock Teams in front of the East End Store taken from the Cambridge Balcony.**



**The East End Store**