
MOUNT RIVERS PUBLIC SCHOOL



First One Hundred Years

1875 – 1975

Centenary Celebrations



MOUNT RIVERS PUBLIC SCHOOL

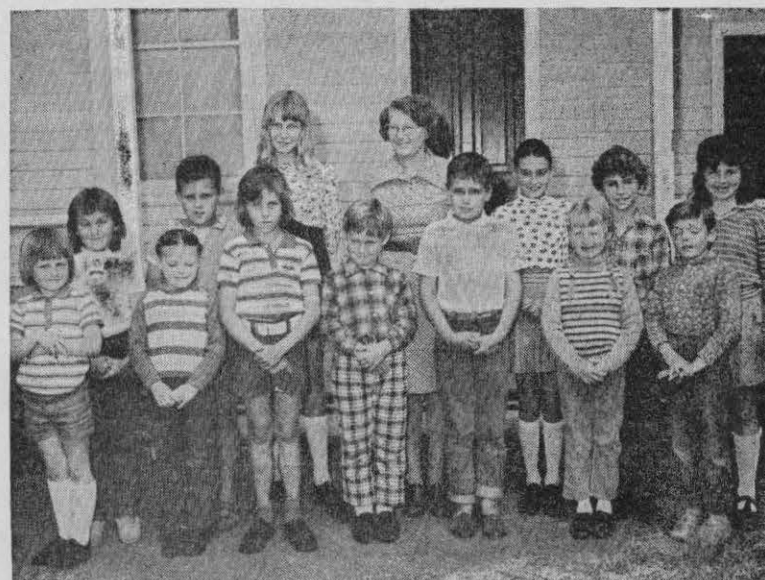
1st NOVEMBER, 1975



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1975 PUPILS AT MOUNT RIVERS



Front Row. L. to R. : Michael Lill, Lynette Richardson, Barry Doosey, Brian Richardson, Mark Kelehear, Julie-Anne Richardson, Peter Kelehear.

Back Row. L. to R. : Tanya Kelehear, Stephen Kelehear, Cathy Doosey, H. L. Hancock (Teacher-in-charge), Julie Lawrence, Rodney Richardson, Leanne Lawrence.

EARLY HISTORY

The first Mount Rivers school was on the McNamara property at a site near Mr. John Lawrence's present residence. The road to Lostock passed through this property. The land surrounding the present Mount Rivers school was a grant of 2560 acres to John Phillips Weber dated the 10th April, 1827.

In 1854, the land passed to Alfred Holden.

In 1857, some small portions of the property were sold, and the balance of the land known as "Penshurst" was held by the Holden family until 1914.

Their home known as "The Old Homestead" was situated nearly opposite Mr. Alan Kelehear's residence, in the paddock now owned by Mr. Alex Richardson. It was destroyed by fire in the early 1920's. Some trees still mark the old home's position.

A store was also conducted on the "Penshurst" estate, the main building being near the Old Mount Rivers post office. This also was destroyed by fire.

OLD PHOTO (MISS COLEMAN'S TIME) LOANED BY D. BOGAN



Back Row. L. to R. : Arthur Glover, Stan Lill, Leonard Bogan, Samuel Lawrence, Colin Pearse.

Middle Row: Geoffrey O'Neill, Gordon Smith, Jessie Lawrence, (Miss Coleman, Teacher), Ella Bogan, Madge O'Neill, Rene Harris.

Front Row: ———, Robert Harris, Richard Harris, ———, ? Glover, ———, Hugh O'Neill.

The subdivision and sale of "Penshurst" in 1914 brought new families into the district.

At the end of 1924 the Mount Rivers school closed owing to the small number of pupils.

From 1926 to 1938 it was a subsidised school. It reopened as a provisional school in 1939.

MOUNT RIVERS PUBLIC SCHOOL

The Hunter Valley in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was always well provided with schools, most of which were small, one-teacher schools. These schools were often relatively close to each other, as the difficulty of road travel and the innumerable creek and river crossings, with their hazards for young children, made it highly desirable for schools to be close to the children's homes.

Prior to 1866 it was not usual for government schools to be established in places where a regular attendance of 30 children could not be guaranteed; Mount Rivers in the 1850's and 1860's could certainly not raise that many children.

From 1867, following the implementation of The Public Schools Act, it became possible to obtain small schools when only fifteen to twenty-five pupils could be guaranteed; however, for such schools, the local residents had to provide the land, building, furniture and fencing; not till 1875 could the Mount Rivers area boast enough children, and a school building.

In August 1875 a committee of parents from Mount Rivers applied for government aid (in the form of teacher's salary, and school text books and supplies) for their private school which had been operating for several months. The parents explained that the nearest school was five miles away at Gresford and was unable to be attended by Mount Rivers children; They were using a small slab building available but were intending to build a more suitable one in the near future; finally they wanted Miss Ellen McNamara to remain as teacher if the school became a government one.

The Council of Education, the education authority from 1867 until the Department of Public Instruction (Education) was established in 1880, considered the request from Mount Rivers and decided to ask one of its inspectors of schools, Mr. J. S. Jones, to investigate the possibility of granting aid. Jones was unable to visit the area at the time, but from his intimate knowledge of the area, had no hesitation in recommending that the Council grant aid, on condition that suitable furniture was provided by the residents and a larger schoolroom erected within three months. The residents agreed and the Council granted aid on 1st November, 1875, the date from which we consider Miss McNamara appointed and Mount Rivers school to have become a government school.

THE FIRST SCHOOL

Mount Rivers' first school was hardly palatial. The building on Mr. F. McNamara's property, was constructed of vertical slabs in the ground; the roof was shingled, and the floor of the room was of beaten earth. The room measured 12 feet by 10 feet, and the walls were only 5½ feet high where they met the roof; there was only one small window and a door. Into this small school, the teacher, Miss Ellen McNamara was able to squeeze nearly twenty pupils.

Miss McNamara was described by the inspector in the following terms: 'The teacher is a native of the place, staid and elderly, of good moral character, respectable in appearance, but deficient in attainments and practical skill. Notwithstanding such shortcomings and in order to give the school a start, I consider it advisable to allow her to have the temporary management of the school.'

Just before the close of the 1875 school year, Inspector Jones visited the school and noted that Miss McNamara's teaching was 'earnest and promising' though 'feeble and mechanical', the children were still being taught only reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic; the mysteries of grammar, music and geography being still in the future. For the moment, however, the school at Mount Rivers was providing a basic course in literacy for its score of young inhabitants.

It was normal for government schools last century to have a school board, consisting of local residents appointed by the education authority. The school board had the responsibility of managing the school and ensuring that the teacher performed her duties satisfactorily, that parents sent their children regularly, and that the school building and property were properly maintained. The first school board for Mount Rivers school was appointed in 1876 and consisted of:

Alfred Holden, Esq., Grazier,
Robert Hipwell, Farmer,
John Turnbull, Farmer,
Phillip Arthur, Farmer,
William White, Farmer,
H. H. Brown, Esq., M.L.A., Grazier.

It was this group of men which was responsible for the erection of a larger and better-furnished slab building in early 1876 to replace the very inadequate first building. The new school was still on Frank McNamara's land. It was leased from McNamara for £12 p.a. The school board had located the school building on the side of the river which suited most families. However, it must be realised that, in communities divided by a twisting river-course, it was generally impossible to satisfy every

family, regardless of which side the school was sited. It was impossible to compromise in such a situation by placing the school in mid-stream; while ever the Paterson River presented crossing difficulties (that is, before an all-weather bridge was constructed), the community at Mount Rivers was likely to be divided into factions determined by which side of the river one lived.

Some idea of the progress of the school can be gained from an 1876 inspection report on the school:

'Water-tank and out-offices needed; material conditions, and appointments otherwise reasonably satisfactory. Attendance partial and tolerably punctual. Rate of regularity (17/22); mild, firm and empirical (government of pupils); appearances neat and clean; pupils docile and well-behaved, but slow, awkward, and diffident; moral tone moderate, improved and promising. Instruction elementary; classification low and appropriate lesson documents of tolerable merit. Teaching painstaking and moderately skilful, but feeble in vigour. Average proficiency of pupils, moderate. Grammar and arithmetic, indifferent.'

Fortunately, Miss McNamara's teaching ability improved with experience and by the early 1880's the school was functioning almost as well as any small out-of-the-way country school, and although Ellen McNamara had only been appointed temporarily in November, 1875, she remained in charge until the end of 1885.

During this time (and indeed until 1906) the school continued to be held in the slab building leased from Mr. McNamara, but in 1883 the inspector of schools began negotiating for a site for a permanent building. This was finally obtained by resumption in 1886 and consisted of 2 acres of Mr. F. McNamara's land on the eastern side of the Lostock-Gresford road.

No action was taken at that time to erect a new school on the site as the 1876 slab building was still adequate for the enrolment, and the old building was still reasonably central. Instead, it was patched up, by nailing metal strips over the cracks caused by shrinkage in the slabs, and by renewing some of the leaking ridge capping. Access to the school was made easier by the construction of a wooden footbridge across the river to keep children dry after rain; the footbridges were financed by tea-parties held in the schoolroom.

A NEW SITE FOR THE SCHOOL

By the late 1890's the distribution of families around Mount Rivers had changed. The centre of population had slowly been moving southwards towards the "Penshurst" homestead and in 1898 there were two clear factions formed — those on the

Penshurst side of the river who wanted the school moved to their side of the river, and those on the northern or Lostock side of the river who wanted it to remain where it was.

In 1898 Thomas Bogan, a spokesman for the Penshurst faction, wrote to the Minister of Public Instruction urging him to approve of the school being moved, but the inspector of schools recommended against it on the grounds that it would not benefit the majority of families. The Penshurst faction then petitioned the Minister in the hope that he would reconsider his earlier decision, but no sooner had they done this than the Lostock faction forwarded a counter-petition requesting that the school stay put. The spokesman for the Lostock faction William O'Neil (junior) who claimed that the "families in the opposition party are but yearly tenants, not even allowed the second years lease" on their farms. Once more, the inspector of schools came down on the side of the conservative party, but an examination of the sketch map provided by the Penshurst faction shows that there was some justice in their claim, and within a few years their cause, if we call it that, would be vindicated.

By 1904 the school was clearly no longer central, and most of the children attending the school were crossing the river each day by means of a log bridge, a practice considered dangerous for young children. The Penshurst faction, therefore, believing it now had sufficient numbers of children to support its case, requested the Department to establish an additional school on their side of the river. Their sketch map of the area showed 21 children would be better accommodated on a Penshurst site compared to the five children who would be relatively inconvenienced.

Upon investigation, the inspector this time had to agree with them; moreover, as the slab building (1876) (still being leased) was by 1904 in a very poor condition, he considered that as a new building was necessary it ought to be built in the most central position. Consequently, he consulted with local residents and a suitable 2 acre site was chosen on the opposite side of the road to "Penshurst" homestead. Mr. Holden, the owner of "Penshurst", disliked the choice and complained through his member of parliament to the Minister of Public Instruction. Once more the inspector visited the area, this time to check on an alternative site offered by Holden. The inspector considered Holden's alternative site completely unsuitable and wrote:

'I can see little in Mr. Holden's objection except a certain fastidiousness at the proximity of such a plebian institution as a public school. The distance is about 150 yd. or 200 yd. and, as the homestead faces a different way, the school would not be an obtrusive feature in the landscape.' Holden adamantly refused to sell the desired block and the Minister therefore approved its resumption which was completed in early 1906.

At this stage it seemed that the school would be renamed Penshurst when it moved to its new site; however, the inspector of schools wisely pointed out that the name of Mount Rivers had been used for many years and should continue, especially as there already existed a Penshurst school in the Sydney area.

A tender from George Morten for £110 was accepted in the late 1905, and in April, 1906 the new school was completed and occupied. The teacher, Miss L. Scott, and the pupils moved into the new building, leaving the old slab building which had served as a school for thirty years. The new building was a weatherboard structure 22ft 6in. by 17ft with an 8ft verandah at one end. New furniture was provided which consisted of six desks, each 9ft long, with matching forms, a 3ft by 2ft table, and a book press. Not until 1910 was the interior of the building lined and painted.

In July, 1916, the teacher, Miss M. E. Stack, called a meeting of parents to discuss the formation of a parent organisation. The meeting held on 8th July, 1916 formed Mount Rivers Parents' and Citizens Association. Mr. J. J. Pearse was elected president, Mr. T. Bogan, treasurer and Miss Stack, Secretary.

During the early 1920's enrolments, which had never been high, decreased gradually until the end of 1924 the teacher, Miss Emily Coleman, was withdrawn from the school and the school temporarily closed; the temporary closure was to last until 1939. Several attempts were made in the late 1920's and 1930's to have the school reopened, but in each case the Department replied that experience had shown that at least fifteen children were needed to maintain the Department's required average attendance of ten; consequently the Department offered parents at Mount Rivers a subsidy to convey the children to the nearest school or alternatively suggested that parents might enrol them at the correspondence school.

By the end of the 1930's enough children were available again, and the school was reopened in February, 1939 under Mr. William Phillips. It is interesting to note that prior to Mr. Phillips' appointment to the school there had only been two other male teachers at the school* — Arthur Davies for a few months in 1908 and Mr. H. P. Jarrett for a similar period in 1912. In the school's first fifty years of operation all its teachers except the ones just mentioned had been females, mostly unmarried. This situation was not fortuitous; accommodation at Mount Rivers had only been available for a single female and when Arthur Davies appeared in 1908 the boarding family was most indignant that he was not a she, hence his speedy departure; since William Phillips, most teachers at Mount Rivers have been males.

Since its reopening in 1939, Mount Rivers Public School has led a precarious existence; its enrolment, never large throughout

any period in its history, gradually declined to around the ten mark for most of the 1960's and for the last few years has been running at thirteen.

* The Late Mr. Tom Hancock told the story of seeing one of these men teachers sitting on a fence flapping his arms. When Mr. Hancock asked the reason he received this reply:—

"If I am served another egg I'll be able to fly!"

TEACHERS AT MOUNT RIVERS PUBLIC SCHOOL

	Appointed
ELLEN McNAMARA	1.11.1875
MARY McNAMARA	6. 1.1886
CATHERINE CONNOLLY	10. 8.1889
HARRIET LEER	22. 3.1895
LETITIA SCOTT	26. 8.1902
MATILDA BOWDITCH	7. 8.1906
ARTHUR DAVIES	12. 8.1908
EDITH ROBINSON	21. 1.1909
H. P. JARRETT (Relieving)	1.1912 — 4.1912
MARY STACK	3. 5.1912
CATHERINE McBRIDE	13. 1.1915
MARY STACK	14. 1.1916
EMILY COLEMAN	9.11.1917
EVELYN GOODWIN	20. 4.1920
EMILY COLEMAN	26. 7.1920
School closed as a Public School	12.1924 — 2.1939
but opened as a Subsidised School during some of those years.	
Members of the Bogan Family supervised the school, also Miss Beryl Dosey spent some time here in a similar role. (See later article).	
WILLIAM PHILLIPS	16. 2.1939
ROBERT HUGHES (Killed in U.S.A. 1973)	7.11.1940
ROBERT MURRAY	1.12.1940
VERDUN SMITH	19. 1.1945
WILLIAM SCOTT	3. 2.1948
FRANCES HAFEY	31. 1.1950
HAZEL HANCOCK	29. 2.1950
ALAN WELLS After Easter	1950
HAZEL HANCOCK	9. 7.1951
RAYMOND WILKINSON	8. 9.1953
REGINALD BYRNES	29. 1.1957
MICHAEL DIXON	27. 1.1959
JOHN GROGAN	31. 1.1961
BERNADETTE DUNSTONE	?
HAZEL HANCOCK Relieving	8. 6.1964
BERNADETTE DUNSTONE	2. 2.1965
HAZEL HANCOCK	1. 2.1972

HISTORY OF MT. RIVERS PUBLIC SCHOOL

Written by J. Fletcher, Division of Planning, 1975

Department of Education, N.S.W.

THE FIRST INSPECTION

The Inspector's visit often causes some nervousness amongst the children.

The first inspection of the Mount Rivers school in the early 1870's was no exception.

To put the children at ease, the Inspector commenced with a simple sentence:—

"A stork is a very tall bird" he read.

"Now Patrick" he said to one of the older boys, "What is a stork?"

"A stalk of corn" said Patrick.

The Inspector read again "A stork is a very tall bird". "Now what is a stork?"

"A stalk of wheat" said Patrick.

The Inspector tried a new approach. He was a very short man little more than five feet in height, "Would you say I am a tall man" he asked?

"Oh, yes Sir" said Patrick.

"How tall?" asked the Inspector.

"Over six feet Sir," said Patrick.

When the Inspector had gone, the Teacher said "Pat, you knew he wasn't over six feet high".

"Of course I did said Pat, "but if I had said he was only five feet high he would have hammered me."

THE SUBSIDISED SCHOOL AT MOUNT RIVERS

The year 1924 was a critical one for Mount Rivers school. When Inspector Mannall visited the school in that year, he found the attendance so low that there was no alternative but to close it.

Some of the children went to Lostock, others to Colstoun.

In 1926 it was reopened as a subsidised school. It continued in this category until the end of 1938, when the attendance had increased to a number which provided for its conduct as a public school.

THE SCHOOL IN 1937



Front Row: Earle Boughton, Lindsay Lawrence, Kevin Chesworth, Desmond Boughton, Enid Joliffe, John Lawrence, Betty Richardson.

Back Row: Eileen Sales, Dell Lawrence, Norma Boughton, John Richardson, Earl Lawrence. Teacher D. Bogan holding Maureen Ninness.

SCHOOL SPORTS

The first Gresford and District School Sports were held on Saturday, 1st October, 1938.

Though a subsidised school at the time, Mount Rivers was active in the organising of and competing in the sports.

As the car — a 1925 Dodge — conveying most of the children to the sports, approached a point immediately below the old Antimony mine, it was halted by a carpet snake stretched across the full width of the road, its tail in the undergrowth on one side, and its head in the bushes on the other side.

With some gentle urging it moved off, climbed a small tree and hung head down over the road, while the car passed beneath.

The combined Lostock-Mount Rivers team on that occasion won the shield, which was donated by the business firms of Gresford.

MOUNT RIVERS PARENTS' AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

The Mount Rivers Parents' and Citizens Association was first formed on the 8th July, 1916 when Miss M. E. Stack was Teacher-in-Charge.

For most of the time since then, the Association has been very active. They have always been ready to do what they can to help the teacher and the children. They have raised funds to supply books and equipment needed, helped to keep the playground tidy and even transported the weathershed from Allynbrook School to this playground at no cost to the Department of Education.

Two very important functions the P & C organised each year were the Empire Day Picnic and the Christmas Tree.

Everyone looked forward to the picnic. Games and races were enjoyed by all. The 'Lolly man' was a great favourite. Sometimes they held a cracker night with a big bon-fire.

THE SCHOOL IN 1950



Holding Flag. L. to R.: Ian Lawrence, Pat Lawrence.

Back Row: Faye Kelehear, Heather Chesworth, John Stace, Val Lawrence, Noel Richardson, Athol Lill.

Seated: Janice Lill, Coral Richardson, Betty Chesworth, David Richardson, Stewart Chesworth, Warren Chesworth, Neville Foster, Ian Richardson, Graham Stace, Alwyn Kelehear.

Sitting: Nancy Chesworth, Nita Chesworth.

The Xmas Tree held a few days before the vacation, started with a concert by the school children followed by a dance for everyone in the schoolroom. Earlier in the day the furniture would be taken from the room and Mrs. Clarice Mortensen's Piano would be brought across the road on a slide drawn by horses. Mrs. Mortensen played for the children's items and then for the dances.

A delicious supper and a cup of tea was served to all. The entertainment was rated 'tops'.

A Christmas Tree and Concert are still held each year but no more dances.

A trip was arranged by the P & C to take the children and the adults to Sydney for the day in 1972. It was well worth the trouble just to see the look on their faces as we approached the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Opera House, the Hydrofoil and Manly Ferry. The International Airport, Hyde Park and up Australia's Square provided more thrills.

It was the first time to Sydney for many and what an experience!

We arrived home at close to midnight. What a journey, but remember it took longer to go to Maitland only, and back.

HISTORY OF MOUNT RIVERS POST OFFICE

With the compliments of

The State Manager (N.S.W.) Australian Postal Commission,

G.P.O. Sydney.

Per MR. K. A. FROST,

District Postal Manager, Maitland.

A post office was established at Lostock, later to be known as Mount Rivers, on 1st January, 1861. Henry Fowler was postmaster, his salary being £12 per annum.

The post office was discontinued owing to the resignation of the postmaster, on 31st March, 1863.

However, it was re-established (at Peshurst) on 10th August, 1863, with Frank McNamara in charge. His salary was £12 per annum, and his sureties were Phillip Rielly of Mount Rivers, and Patrick Bogan of Ann's Grove, both farmers.

Frank McNamara's salary decreased to £10 per annum in 1871, but by 1878 it had increased to £14 per annum.

MAILS

In a letter dated January, 1894, a request was made by Mr. H. H. Brown, M.P. asking that a daily mail service be provided between Gresford and Lostock, in lieu of the thrice weekly service, for a further sum of £20 a year. The contractor at the time, Thomas Walker, of Gresford, performed this service on horseback, for £29 per annum.

The district inspector recommended that the proposed service should not be granted. The reason for disapproval of the additional service was that only about 2,500 letters a year or an average of about 7 a day were posted with £19 a year postal revenue being collected, whereas the cost of the post office and the mail service amounted to £43 per annum. Therefore the increase in expenditure would not warrant the additional mail service requested.

MOUNT RIVERS

On 31st August, 1894, Luke Sullivan, Secretary of the Lostock Progress Committee forwarded two letters, one asking for a daily mail service from Gresford to Lostock, and the other applying for the re-establishment of a post office at Lostock in lieu of the receiving office.

The matter was referred to the district inspector whose recommendations were as follows:—

1. That the position of the Receiving Office known as Upper Lostock be not interfered with unless it can be shown by the Lostock Progress Committee by petition that the residents are reasonably unanimous in favour of its removal to the public school.
2. That the name of the post office at Lostock be not changed until sufficient time has elapsed to enable it to be ascertained which of the two places is the most entitled to have a post office.
3. That as the Receiving Office keeper at Upper Lostock is willing to convey mails six times, instead of three times a week as at present to and from Lostock and Upper Lostock for the portage allowance now paid to him, viz £23 per annum, the request for a six times a week be granted."

On 22nd November, 1897, an offer from Ralph Turner, Receiving Office Keeper, Upper Lostock, to carry mails to and from Lostock and Upper Lostock, six times in lieu of three times a week at the rate of £23 per annum, that being the rate of the thrice weekly service, was accepted to take effect from 7th December, 1897.

On 15th February, 1898, Luke Sullivan forwarded two more

letters. The first asked that tenders be called for a daily mail service between Lostock and Upper Lostock. The other requested that the name be changed from Lostock to Mount Rivers.

The request for tenders to be invited for a six times weekly horseback mail service between Lostock and Upper Lostock was approved, and the tender of Ralph Turner, of Lostock for the period from 1st June, 1899 to 31st December, 1900, for £21/15/0 per annum; distance 5 miles; was accepted on 13th April, 1898.

The request for a change of name from Lostock to Mount Rivers was once again refused.

An increase in salary to the postmaster at Lostock from £16 to £21 per annum was urged by H. H. Brown, M.P. in October, 1899.

A return for 1898 showed:—

Number of letters posted weekly	74
Number of mails received and despatched	26
Attendances between 6 p.m. & 9 p.m. — 6 a.m. to 7.30 a.m.	
Revenue for 1898	£8
Salary for 1898	£16
Salary justified by tables	£21 p.a.

Although the above return showed an increase from £16 to £21 to be justified by the scale rates, it was considered that the £16 per annum paid to the postmaster was ample remuneration for the work performed.

CHANGE OF NAME

The name of the Lostock Post Office was changed to Mount Rivers from 16th December, 1904, and Upper Lostock changed to Lostock.

LONG SERVICE

After 42 years in the position of postmaster, Frank McNamara died on 31st October, 1905.

Miss Mildred Kelly, 23 years of age, McNamara's assistant for nine years, was appointed postmistress on 1st November, 1905, her salary being £15 per annum.

A telephone was installed at Mount Rivers Post Office in 1910, for use in despatching and receiving telegrams.

Miss Mildred Kelly married and tendered her resignation 1st May, 1914. She named her successor as Miss Clarice Arthur, and stated her name was now Mildred Smith.

Miss Clarice Arthur, 22 years of age, was appointed postmistress on 4th June, 1914, receiving £28 per annum salary. Miss Arthur had assisted the postmistress for 5 years.

TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

A telephone exchange was established at Mount Rivers Post Office on 1st July, 1917.

The earliest list of subscribers available is that which appeared in the directory for October, 1917, as follows:—

MOUNT RIVERS LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS

(9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.)
Daily (Sunday and Holidays excepted)

Public Telephone — Post Office

3. LEE, Lance, 'Leighford'

2. PEARSE, J. J., 'Penshurst'

On 6th October, 1920, Lance Lee, J.P. wrote asking Mathew Charlton, Esq., to represent Miss Arthur in regard to an increase in her salary from £27 to £42 per annum. This increase was granted by the Department back dated from the 1st July, 1920.

Miss Arthur wrote to the district inspector, Newcastle in September, 1921, notifying him of her marriage and that her name in future would be Mrs. Mortensen.

At the time it was not the policy of the Department to employ married women. To overcome the difficulty of finding a new postmaster it was suggested that Mrs. Mortensen's husband be appointed postmaster. Frederick Mortensen agreed to take charge of the office, and stated that he was a poultry farmer, and would conduct the office in his premises. He took charge of the office on 22nd September, 1921.

REMOVAL OF OFFICE

Mortensen informed the Department on 19th January, 1922, that he had acquired a cottage at Penshurst adjoining the Public School and wished to remove the post office to the cottage. The request was approved and the removal was completed in June, 1922.

On 22nd November, 1926, Mortensen notified the Department that the property on which the office was situated had been sold and requested permission to remove the office to a cottage "about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile lower down right on the main road".

Approval was given for the removal of the post office on 21st December, 1926.

The new office was situated on Block 7, Parish of Lewinsbrook, County of Durham, 52 chains nearer Allynbrook, and was occupied on 5th January, 1927.

A further removal was effected in July, 1931, to a site approximately 1 mile distant from the previous site.

Following the death of Frederick Mortensen, on 12th March, 1956, his wife Mary Clarice Mortensen applied for appointment as postmistress. She was subsequently appointed as from 1st March, 1956.

LONG SERVICE

After 52 years of service at Mount Rivers Post Office, Mrs. M. C. Mortensen resigned as from the close of business on 11th September, 1966. A letter of thanks was conveyed to her by the Department for her excellent service over such a long period.

When it became evident that Mrs. Mortensen would not be well enough to return to work efforts were made to obtain a successor. However, none of the local residents was willing to accept permanent appointment.

Arrangements were made to circulate mail to local residents on the then existing mail service; the nineteen telephone subscribers were cut over to East Gresford Telephone Exchange; and the office was temporarily closed as from 10th January, 1967.

In view of the fact that a reasonable service was being provided and there was no suitable person available to accept the position of postmaster, Mount Rivers Post Office was permanently closed as from 10th January, 1967.

N.S.W. POA1109. A.J.J. 8.75.

Refs:— Aust. Govt. Archives (N.S.W. Br.) Syd.

REMINISCENCES OF EX-PUPILS AND OLDER RESIDENTS OF MOUNT RIVERS AS TOLD TO THE PRESENT PUPILS AT MOUNT RIVERS SCHOOL ON TUESDAY, 9th SEPTEMBER, 1975.

EARLIEST SETTLERS

Some of the names of the earliest families in Mount Rivers were:— Patrick Bogan, James Simmons, William Duggan, Philip Arthur, Edward Nowlan, John Turnbull,, Thomas Pascoe, Edwin Eveleigh, Charles Eveleigh, Edward Jones, George Eveleigh, William O'Neill,* Charles Garland, William White,* Michael Bryan, Frank McNamara,* Robert Hipwell, Arthur Holden, J.P., H. Creighton,* H. H. Brown, Esq. M.L.A. Sam Lill, W. Soper, H. Price, ? Skaines, A. Pascoe, G. Pascoe, S. Drinkwater, W. Hicks, J. Pascoe, ? Dennis, T. Bogan, William Kelly, W. Bogan, Thomas Duggan, C. Watson, J. Hedges, J. Middleton. Relatives of these old pioneers are still to be found in the district.

* Headstones on the graves of some of these folk are still to be seen on the site of the old cemetery on the property occupied by Mrs. Les Lawrence and her son Mr. John Lawrence.

Mr. A. Holden owned "Penshurst" the property now owned by the Richardson families. The old homestead opposite the present school was burnt down. Mr. Ken Richardson now lives in the home built to take its place.

TRANSPORT

To get to Mount Rivers in the early days one had to travel on horseback, a bullock waggon, dray or spring cart. Later sulky or buggy was used. The tracks were rough, steep and winding. The river had to be forded many times.

It was reported that a Lostock woman took the best part of three days to travel to Maitland to visit a doctor.

When Buggies were used some hardy travellers left home in the wee hours for Maitland. While they shopped the horses were spelled and fed. The shoppers did not return home till well after midnight. No wonder they didn't go often.

The first Service Car was run by Clyde Hancock. He came up the Paterson across to Allynbrook and back to Gresford (about 1917).

An ex-pupil, Leila Glover tells how Miss Stack, her teacher allowed the children to sit on the school fence and watch the first car go by. (Probably this car belonged to Dr. Perkins).

It is thought that the first car owned by anyone around Mount Rivers belonged to Mr. Jim Richardson. (T. Model Ford)?

Mrs. Earl Lawrence's Grandfather, Mr. Jim Hancock had the contract to construct some of the road below Coulston and to build the bridge.

DWELLINGS

Most of the early homes were of upright slabs. The roof was of bark or shingles. All roofing iron had to be imported from overseas. Only the more prosperous families could afford such. After 1915 with the opening of B.H.P. it became more plentiful.

The two biggest homes in the area were owned by Mr. A. Holden (timber) Penshurst and Mr. McNamara's stone house (Mt. Rivers).

TRADE AND COMMERCE

The residents of Mount Rivers were very well catered for by hawkers, and delivery waggons from the Gresford and Mount

Rivers stores. These stores supplied groceries, draperies, clothing, boots and a variety of other goods.

One of the Indian hawkers, when he pulled up at a home, would hand out a variety of toys and trinkets for the children to hold. When he was ready to leave he'd start to collect the things from the children, saying, "You cry, mummy buy!"

Mount Rivers had two shops in the early days. One on the Lostock side of the school, managed by Les Smith; and the other opposite the school in Mr. William Smith's residence. His wife managed the shop and sold a variety of goods. One ex-pupil, Tom Talbot, tells of the halfpenny lines she sold. He had a sweet tooth!

CROPS AND FARMING

One of the earliest crops grown was wheat. This grain was taken by bullock team to Singleton to be ground into flour. The route taken was via Boyce's Road.

Tobacco was another crop grown. It was manufactured into pipe tobacco at Mr. Jack Beatty's in East Gresford. Mr. Beatty won a medal for his tobacco. His daughter Mrs. E. Richardson, Hotel Beatty East Gresford has it.

The Lawrie family at Halton manufactured tobacco also.

Grapes were yet another crop. The extract below from the late Ray Chesworth's Homework Book explains what happened to the grape harvests.

VINEYARDS — 4th MARCH, 1915

"The man who owns the grapes has to have a note book to take down the names of the pickers. The men get five shillings a day and their dinner. Three or four men in some vineyards have a big tin on their backs which is called a donkey. In some vineyards there is a cask on a slide drawn up and down the row. The grapes are taken to the cellars in the bullock waggons. There the grapes are pressed by a press. The juice is put into vats for two days to let it ferment. Next it is put into casks."

When the orchards on the farms became more productive Mr. Ned Smith of Allynbrook used to call at the farms and buy oranges and other fruit. These he took to Maitland to sell or be sold in Sydney.

Mr. Jim Chesworth of Williamtown came with his horse waggon regularly and purchased eggs or any surplus produce from the farms. These he sold to the markets in Newcastle.

In the early part of this century cream was sent by horse waggon to the Butter Factory at Gresford. The first motorised milk trucks had solid tyred wheels. Later the cream and milk were taken to Morpeth and Hexham twice a day by modern motor trucks. During the war, gas producers were used a fuel economy measure on the trucks. Today bulk tankers take milk only, every second day.

MINING

Before World War 1. Mr. T. R. Hancock started mining for antimony at Mount Rivers. Because the price per ton was not very much he stopped work. However, during the war the price rose and he began again. In 1925 he received a certificate and a medal at the British Exhibition for his samples of antimony from the mine.

POLICE

East Gresford has been the station for all policemen. The early policemen rode horses to do their rounds. Their duties included taking the census, inspecting stock and dairies and checking health regulations as well as ordinary police work.

Mr. Lonsdale was the last policeman to travel the district on horseback. (Late 1940's or early 1950's).

HEALTH SERVICES

The earliest doctors were those who had received land grants in the district (Dr. Parks). Dr. Bennett used a horse drawn vehicle to get from Maitland each Friday fortnight (Sale days). He held a surgery in Gresford. Dr. Perkins travelled from Morpeth. He had the first car about. His surgery too, was held in Gresford on Sale days each Friday fortnight.

Dr. Brown was the first resident doctor in Gresford. He started the first hospital in Gresford behind the Gresford School Residence.

Mr. Solling was the first dentist to visit Gresford. He had his surgery in Miss Mann's home. (On the top side of where Mr. Simpson's home now stands).

Miss Laura Holden was often called on to assist in an accident or an illness in Mt. Rivers.

Mrs. Joe Watson, Mrs. Dunstone's mother was a 'Bush Nurse' rather a district nurse before her marriage. She travelled the district on a bicycle. The residents contributed to a fund which helped to pay her salary.

Some home remedies were regular doses of castor oil, senna tea, epsom salts and Pruno. Sulphur and treacle was given at the change of the season, to help keep better health.

Red flannel was worn next to the skin to relieve pain of rheumatism.

CHURCH SERVICES AT MOUNT RIVERS

Because there were no church buildings in Mount Rivers, the various Christian denominations held their services in private homes.

Three different denominations were catered for:— Anglican, Congregational, and Roman Catholic.

To make travelling easier at night for his congregation and himself Anglican clergyman, Rev. C. Stretch only held night services on bright moonlight nights.

Now the Mount Rivers citizens attend their respective churches at Lostock or East Gresford.

ENTERTAINMENTS AND RECREATION

Because transport was limited, the Mount Rivers folk had to provide their own entertainments.

Tea parties were held in the old school to raise funds for the footbridges across the river.

Dances were held in private homes and the present school to raise funds for the school, soldiers at the war, or the church. Mrs. Mortensen used to lend her piano for the dances in the school. She was a good dance pianist. ? O'Neill and 'Tot' Kenny and Mr. Soper played the violins. Mr. Dagg played the accordion.

Mr. Harold Lawrence remembers a dance held at Skaines' home nearly seventy years ago.

On Boxing Day everyone attended the Picnic Races on Mr. Holden's property. The farmers would show off their horses.

Other horse races were held on the flat now owned by Mr. Fred Miles. To this day that flat is often referred to as the race-course.

No Cricket Club was ever formed in Mount Rivers, most young fellows rode their ponies to Lostock to play there.

Tennis was once a popular sport in Mount Rivers.

For many years Lostock and Mount Rivers Schools used to get together for sports on Empire Day.

Since 1938 the school children have participated in the district schools sports held in Gresford annually. (except for the period of World War 2 and a couple of years after).

Miss Finlay, who was Miss Laura Holden's companion used to train the church choir and children for church concerts.

Miss Stack used to teach local children the violin.

Mrs. Mortensen taught the piano and violin to many children of the district.

Down through the years there have been school concerts. As no local hall has been available the front verandah of the school has been the stage. The audience has sat out under the stars.

The first radio in the school was a "bitzer" made up by the teacher, Mr. R. L. Murray and Mr. Ray Chesworth. It was battery operated.

The first lights, other than oil lamps to light up the school for functions were battery-operated lights put in by Mr. R. Chesworth.



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