

Henry Lawson's Childhood Home

Henry Lawson was one of Australia's most noted authors and poets of the nineteenth century. His works on Australian contemporary life are some of the most vivid accounts of this period in Australian history.

Lawson was born in Grenfell, N.S.W. but the family moved to Eurunderee when he was very young. The original building was located near the Mudgee Goldfields. There is some dispute about the appearance of the building but the present drawing is based on a structure described in books and by a past resident.

The back rooms of the structure were, for some time, a hotel. The front two rooms were built from school construction "left-overs" by Henry Lawson's father. The slab kitchen in the back of the house was where all of the family meals were prepared. This later became a storeroom.

Henry Lawson spent several years here. Various rooms, particularly those in the older slab section of the building, inspired portions of his work. The building itself is quite typical of many farm dwellings throughout New South Wales.

O'Meally's Shanty

Patrick O'Meally's Inn was a meeting place and source of supply for many of the bushrangers in the area around the Weddin Mountains in the Central Western Portion of New South Wales. Johnnie Gilbert and Ben Hall were noted to have visited O'Meally's "sly grog shop". O'Meally was a member of Frank Gardener's band of bushrangers. The inn was burnt to the ground by police in 1863, so this building has been reconstructed from material supplied by contemporary drawings and descriptions. O'Meally remained on the shady side of the law and was eventually shot down in a gunfight on a farm not far from the sight of the inn.

The inn was constructed from slabs of Cyprus Pine and roofed with bark. The verandah was covered with canvas draped over a rough pole frame. Most of the furniture was made from rough hewn slabs, supported on a framework of poles lashed and pinned together. Perhaps there were a few good pieces of furniture of dubious origin. These may have been abandoned by settlers on the way to the goldfields.

Cobb & Co. Store

In 1857, Freeman Cobb, a young American, brought his hickory-built, leather slung coaches from America to gold rush Australia and established an efficient coach network that kept pace with the rapid development of the country. The company that Cobb established became a byword in the annals of Australian transport. Cobb & Co. stations were located along the coach lines between major centres. Basically, they served as changing stations and stables for the horses; however, some stations expanded their operations to include a store, hotel, freight and booking offices.

This building was originally located at Trangie, N.S.W. The store is a simple rough, slab structure with a long verandah across the front of the store. The vertical slabs of adzed and pit sawn timbers were used to construct the walls of the building. With no pretentious shop front, the store had a large variety of goods and services to offer to travellers and settlers. Adjacent to the store is a large, weatherboard stable with adequate room for a team of coach horses and storage of fodder.

Ben Hall's Farmstead

Ben Hall was one of the most noted bushrangers of Australian history. Hall, like many of the early squatters with small holdings, was just barely able to eke out an existence in the harsh Australian bush. He was able to make some money from capturing wild horses. In 1862, Hall was arrested and charged with horse stealing by Sir Fredrick Pottinger, but was later cleared of this charge. While in prison, his wife left to live with an ex-policeman named Taylor. Ben felt that the loneliness of the Australian bush and his long absence from home may have contributed to her desertion. Hall placed most of the blame for these problems on Pottinger and was, therefore, receptive to Frank Gardener's call to join his gang to rob the Gold Escort. On June 15, 1862, they successfully robbed the gold coach near Eugowra and this launched Hall into a life of crime. Hall organized and took part in several robberies but never deliberately set out to murder anyone. Ben Hall was never tried for his subsequent crimes but was ambushed and killed by the police in 1865.

Ben Hall's farmstead was located in the Weddin Mountains near Grenfell. It was a rough, slab and bark shack with a low verandah on both the front and back of the house. The farm had a large barn to house horses, the odd calf, and fodder for the animals. The house was burnt down by troopers after Hall's arrest and the present drawing is based on contemporary descriptions and reconstructions of the buildings by the A.B.C. and the Lachlan Vintage Village.