

Nelungaloo Homestead

Social Scene from Reg Ryan

The family arrived from South Australia in the 1860's and settled in this area called Nelungaloo, which is near Parkes. They built the first dwelling which is a typical slab building with a shingle roof, a two room dwelling which would have been their kitchen, living area and bedroom. They would have had some of their possessions under the verandahs, and if the weather was kind to them, they probably would have slept there.

At that time it was pretty primitive around this area. Once they had been here a little while and started to establish the farm, they would have built the next part, which is the other slab building running at right angles to the kitchen. This would have been bedroom, dining and living area. The first kitchen wing now would be made purely for kitchen and pantry, for the making of butter and other domestic activities.

They would have lived like this for approximately 10 years and after a good year or two, they added the brick dining-room. This is much grander in style and they started to gather around themselves a few of the comforts that they would not have been able to afford before. The dining-room is set up as a typical middle class dining-room, with a much higher standard of living than normally would have been seen around this area.

After about 8 to 10 years they added to the complex by building 3 more bedrooms. When these bedrooms were constructed the larger slab homestead, which was built after the kitchen, would have become a breakfast room in which to serve morning and noon meals. The brick dining-room would have been used strictly for formal evening dinner. The front main room, which would have recently been the master bedroom, would then become a parlour or sitting-room and the smaller rooms which would have been bedrooms would have become the offices. The passage way, library-type room with a gun cabinet, would have been a walkway off the sitting-room into the main bedroom. There are verandahs that continue around the homestead, which the pioneer soon found out in this climate protected him from the elements. Entrances to most rooms are off this verandah.

Nelungaloo HomesteadDining-room

This magnificent dining-room by comparison to all the other rooms is on a Grand scale and would have been used purely for formal evening dinner. It is furnished basically of cedar and mahogany furniture. Cedar was used in Australia because it was the closest timber they could get to mahogany. Mahogany was traditionally used for dining-room furniture, the chairs being more solid, the tables were usually an extension table and extended to suit a large family. All the furniture and fittings in Nelungaloo dining-room date prior to 1860, so the furniture would have been purchased or brought out with some of the family pieces.

The Lustre vases on the mantelpiece are designed to reflect the candle at night this gives the room more light, that is why you see them around chandeliers. The typical silver centre piece on the table with the crystal bowl would have been decked with fresh fruit, grapes etc. or what ever was on hand that they had grown themselves.

There are large side boards containing tray-type shelves on one end for glasses and in the other end a cellorette to keep the wines and sprits in. The long drawer in the centre would have been for cutlery and linen. There was always a serving table handy to the door so the butler or maid could serve off the tray or table onto the main dining area. There is a book case in the dining-room which is made of cedar and dates back to the 1850's this came from Como house in Melbourne: it also had a serving bench from which you could serve. It was used as a book case and to hold some of the china and glass wear in the base.

All Victorian homes had palms in their rooms and this was a period where they liked indoor plants. We have turned a full cycle today, indoor plants again are in homes.

The curtain material is as close as we can get to the original. They were in a type of repp material which was corded and usually not too shiny, the bobble fringes were on the edges of all the curtains and they had lace centre drops of cotton.

The picture frames are of birds-eye maple with steel engravings, these were popular for dining and sitting rooms from the 1840's up to about 1880. A few oil paintings were hung if they were lucky enough to have them or if the lady of the house painted. It was often left to the women to do these little paintings and embroideries to decorate the home.

The room has a painted daydoe around the wall with a stencilled freeze above walls thus marking them, it was easier to repaint the bottom half than to do the wholeroom again because paint was not as readily available as we have it today. Stencil work was done on walls and ceilings to take the place of wall paper. In the cypress pine ceiling and roof there is a vent, this is purely to let the hot air out, it is made of zinc metal sheet with little perforations. This was typical decoration of this period from the 1860's up until the late 1880's and 1890's.