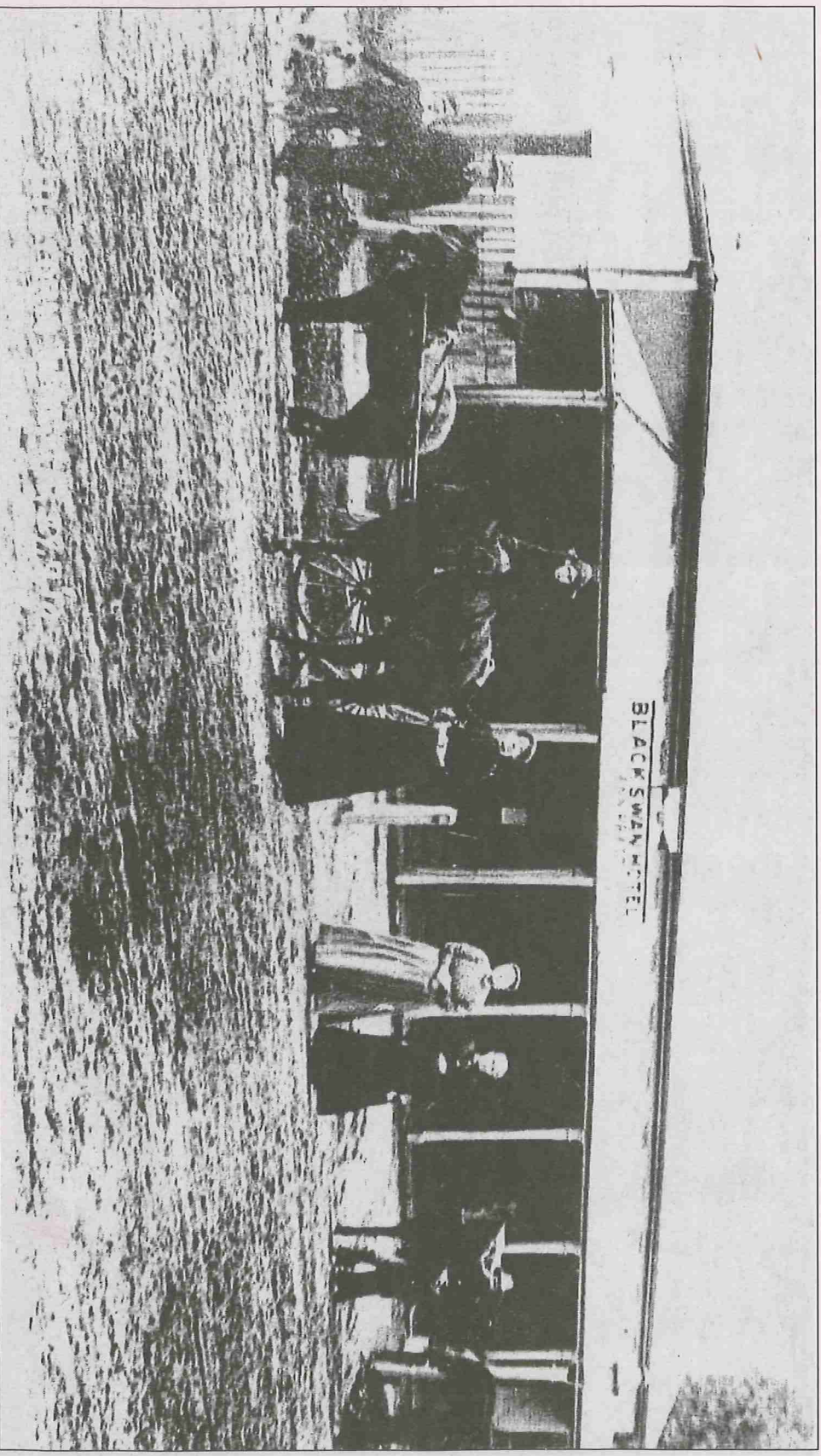


What you should know

- The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue.
- Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage.
- For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more information.



The Black Swan Hotel, 1910.

The Cartwright family murder

at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



In 1859, Thomas Cartwright, a pardoned convict, an ex-police constable and shepherd, murdered his wife, Catherine, at their home which was situated north of Wagga, now known as Cartwright's Hill.

His weapon of choice was a fire-shovel he had picked up while they were arguing. Though Catherine had been hit repeatedly over the head, she did not die immediately.

It was a little over a week later that she began having fits, and finally died on Tuesday, September 20 – 11 days after the beating.

The Cartwrights

THOMAS Cartwright was born in Athlone, Ireland and was transported to NSW in 1834 for sheep stealing at the age of 34.

In 1841, he married Catherine Gormly, a 19-year-old Irish Catholic, who had arrived in NSW with her family in 1840.

For just a few months in 1849, Thomas was employed as a police constable at Wagga. He was dismissed from the police force for losing prisoner Bernard MacMannus.

While escorting the prisoner to Goulburn, MacMannus pretended to be sick, so Thomas had put him on his own horse. Thomas then tripped and fell and MacMannus seized his opportunity and took off.

Thomas was then employed as a shepherd on Eumonyhareenyha.

In 1856, he was able to purchase 150 acres of land in April 1856; land which later became known as Cartwright's Hill.

The Murder

ON FRIDAY, September 9, Thomas and Catherine Cartwright's 15-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, came home to find her mother with blood on her face and a cut on her head. Catherine told Elizabeth to take her away from Thomas to a neighbour's house, about a mile or so away.

The next day, Elizabeth brought her father to see Catherine.

He decided she didn't need a doctor. He washed her face and bandaged up her head wound, then asked her if she would go home with him.

She said she would. She spent the rest of the day in bed and told everyone she was all right.

For the next few days, Catherine was out of bed, doing things around the house, though she was reportedly complaining of pains in the head.

But by Sunday, nine days after she was hurt, Catherine really began to show signs of being unwell and, on Monday, they sent for the doctor.

Dr Levy asked Catherine what had caused her sickness, but because Thomas was with her, she wouldn't give him an answer.

Thomas told the doctor she had fallen against a block of wood near the door. Catherine spent the next night experiencing epileptic-type fits and died Tuesday morning.

She reportedly said to her husband, just before she died, "God bless you, take care of my poor children."

A post mortem was carried out Wednesday morning by Dr Levy and Dr Morgan.

They found many bruises on her arms and on one of her thighs; she had a cut on her lip, a wound on her left temple, and when they removed her scalp, they found more bruises all over her head.

On removing the skull, they found the beginnings of an abscess in the centre of one of the bruises, as well as other evidence to tell them that death was caused by the injuries to the head.

Thomas was arrested on suspicion of murdering his wife with a fire-shovel; a magisterial enquiry was held at the Swan Inn at North Wagga, which committed him for trial at Goulburn.

Dr Levy told the enquiry, "the wounds could not have been caused by one fall, but a series of falls might have occasioned them; the wound on the top of the head was, in my opinion, inflicted with some blunt instrument; all the wounds were caused at the same time, and, I should say, between eight and 12 days ago."

Peter Pickering, an employee of the Cartwrights, was also arrested, for aiding and abetting.

The enquiry was told that Pickering had said he had to take the fire-shovel out of Thomas's hands because he was hitting Catherine with it, though he denied saying any such thing.

At the trial in Goulburn, Thomas pleaded not guilty of murder, but guilty of manslaughter.

The judge said that had he been tried on the charge of murder, he probably would have been found guilty, and been sentenced accordingly.

But, as it was, he was sentenced to only two years' imprisonment with hard labour. Peter Pickering was discharged, as the Crown Prosecutor could not see sufficient grounds to proceed with the case against him.

The judge made the following comments: "... it seemed to be a mistaken notion with many that they were quite at liberty to beat their wives as they chose... [He] hoped that the case of the prisoner would be a warning to any who might hear him."