

# City's history owes much to McGraths

THE CSU Regional Archives is extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month. This initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours. The next Saturday opening is today, October 6, from 10am to 3pm.

## what you need to know

The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and the first Saturday of every month from 10am to 3pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on 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 straight forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, please phone 6925 3666, email [archive@csu.edu.au](mailto:archive@csu.edu.au), or visit our website at [www.csu.edu.au/research/archives](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/archives) for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

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JOHN Joseph McGrath (fondly known as "Johnnie" or "Jack") was born in Sydney on July 19, 1852, the eldest son of

John and Sarah McGrath, owners of a Campbelltown tailoring business.

On arrival in Wagga, at about the age of 15, he became an apprentice saddler and later established his successful saddlery business, JJ McGrath and Company, on Fitzmaurice Street. This reportedly became the largest harness and saddlery manufactory outside of Sydney by 1893. McGrath disposed of his business in 1894, although his establishment continued to thrive under new ownership.

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church was the scene of his marriage to Jane Ferguson on July 25, 1877, whom he had met fifteen months beforehand. Their family consisted of three sons and three daughters; Winnie, Irene, Amy Louise, Gordon, Ernest and Charles Rixon.

## WATTLE VALE

"Wattle Vale" at North Wagga was the family home, where friends, neighbours and guests were greeted with much warmth and hospitality.

Ernest McGrath assisted his father in the management of the property which traded under McGrath and Son.

McGrath's passion for horses developed to the breeding of thoroughbreds after he acquired "Wattle Vale" and this knowledge of horses found him all over Australia judging at shows.

Success with his thoroughbred stud was well known and respected throughout the "turf" world; he was the owner of three Wagga Gold Cup winners: "Kipling" ridden by F Kuhn in 1902, "First May" ridden by A Hyland in 1905 and "Jacqueline" ridden by Thomas in 1906.

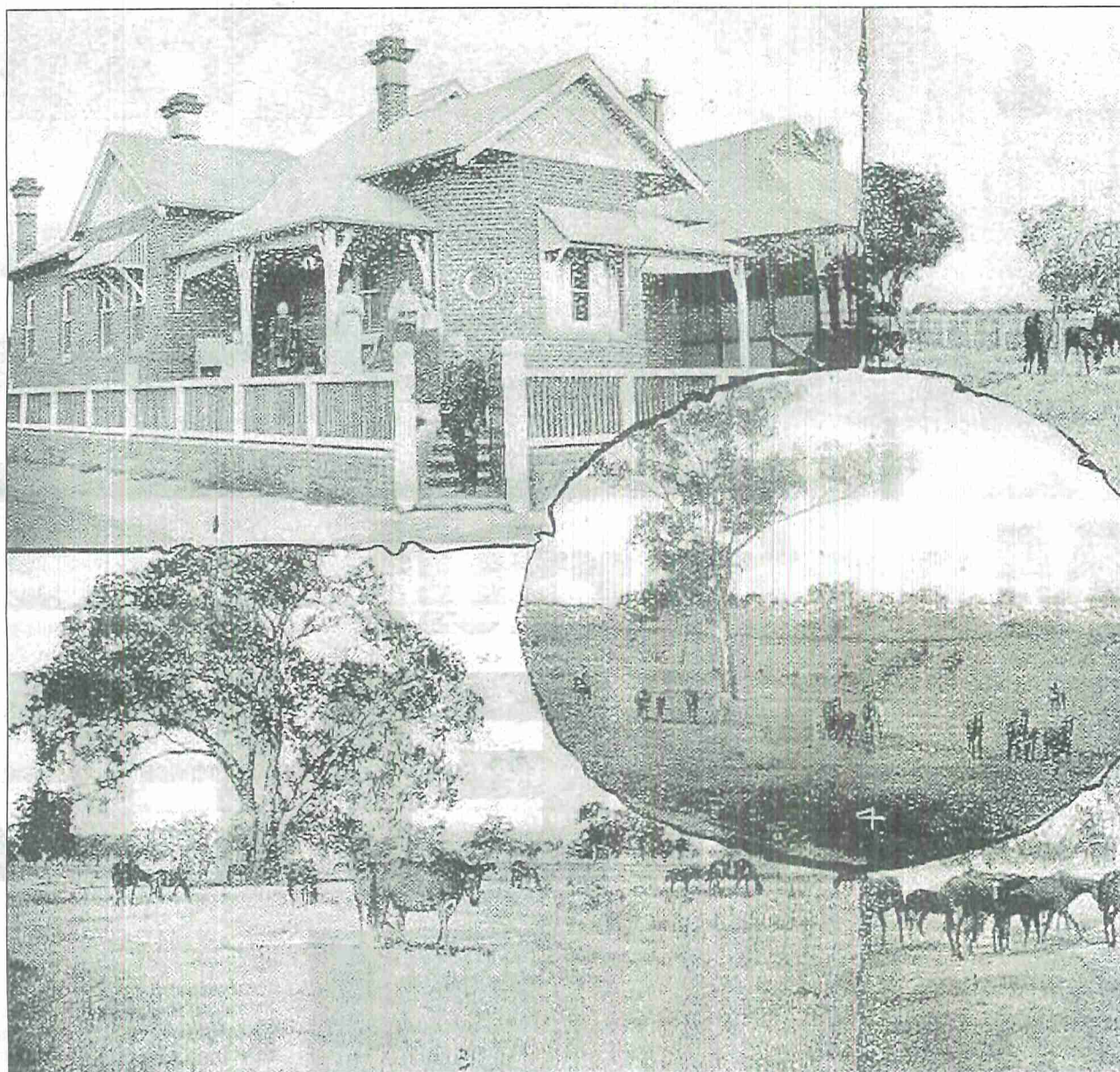
## PUBLIC LIFE

McGrath had a very active association in public life; so much so, that only a few of his contributions can be mentioned here.

He was an alderman of the Wagga Wagga Council from 1887 to 1895, holding the position of mayor in 1891, 1892 and 1894. He was long in favour of protecting the interests of North Wagga and in 1922 he headed a deputation of North Wagga residents to council regarding the separation of North Wagga from the municipality of Wagga.

He held the position of president of the Murrumbidgee Pastoral and Agricultural Association for many years, chairman of the Murrumbidgee Turf Club, chairman of the directors of the Murrumbidgee Co-op Butter Factory Ltd, and chairman of the Murrumbidgee Milling Company.

For about 50 years McGrath was associated with the MUJOOOF Lodge and held the position of grand master of NSW for 20 years. He was also a member of the Masonic Lodge.



In his position on the Wagga Land Board, McGrath was able to assist new settlers and act as an advocate for Closer Settlement. He was appointed to the board in 1896 and after 34 years retired in January 1930, his son, Ernest, succeeded to the position.

During the Great War, McGrath was a committee member of the World War I Patriotic Fund and in 1915 he subscribed to the "Kangaroo" March. In the 1920s, he was vice-president of the committee to raise funds for the Memorial Gardens. Two of his sons served in the 1st Light Horse Regiment.

Mrs Jane McGrath was also a

very active member of Wagga's community. During the War, she served as vice-president of Wagga's Soldiers' Comforts Fund. She was a long-term organist for St Andrew's Church and worked for the Wagga District Hospital, the Red Cross, and the Benevolent Society. Mrs McGrath was also a member of the Ladies Committee for the Wagga Show for many years and acted as a judge and steward in the women's sections.

## RETIREMENT

About 1923, McGrath retired from his grazing and breeding interests at "Wattle Vale" and settled at the

Edwardian residence "Athalee" at 55 Trail Street, Wagga (on the corner of Kincaid Street).

Mr and Mrs McGrath celebrated their golden wedding in July 1927 at a dinner with family and 100 guests. In 1930, McGrath Street, North Wagga was named after him in appreciation of his community service. Only four years later, on September 12, 1934, John Joseph McGrath passed away.

Mrs McGrath sold "Athalee" in 1935 and moved to Sydney to be closer to her daughters, Mrs Winnie MacWilliam of Neutral Bay and Miss Amy Louise McGrath of Beecroft. She died on April 2, 1945 and was well remembered for her hospitality and charity work.

Mrs McGrath sold "Athalee" in 1935 and moved to Sydney to be closer to her daughters, Mrs Winnie MacWilliam of Neutral Bay and Miss Amy Louise McGrath of Beecroft. She died on April 2, 1945 and was well remembered for her hospitality and charity work.

- Compiled by June Dietrich

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