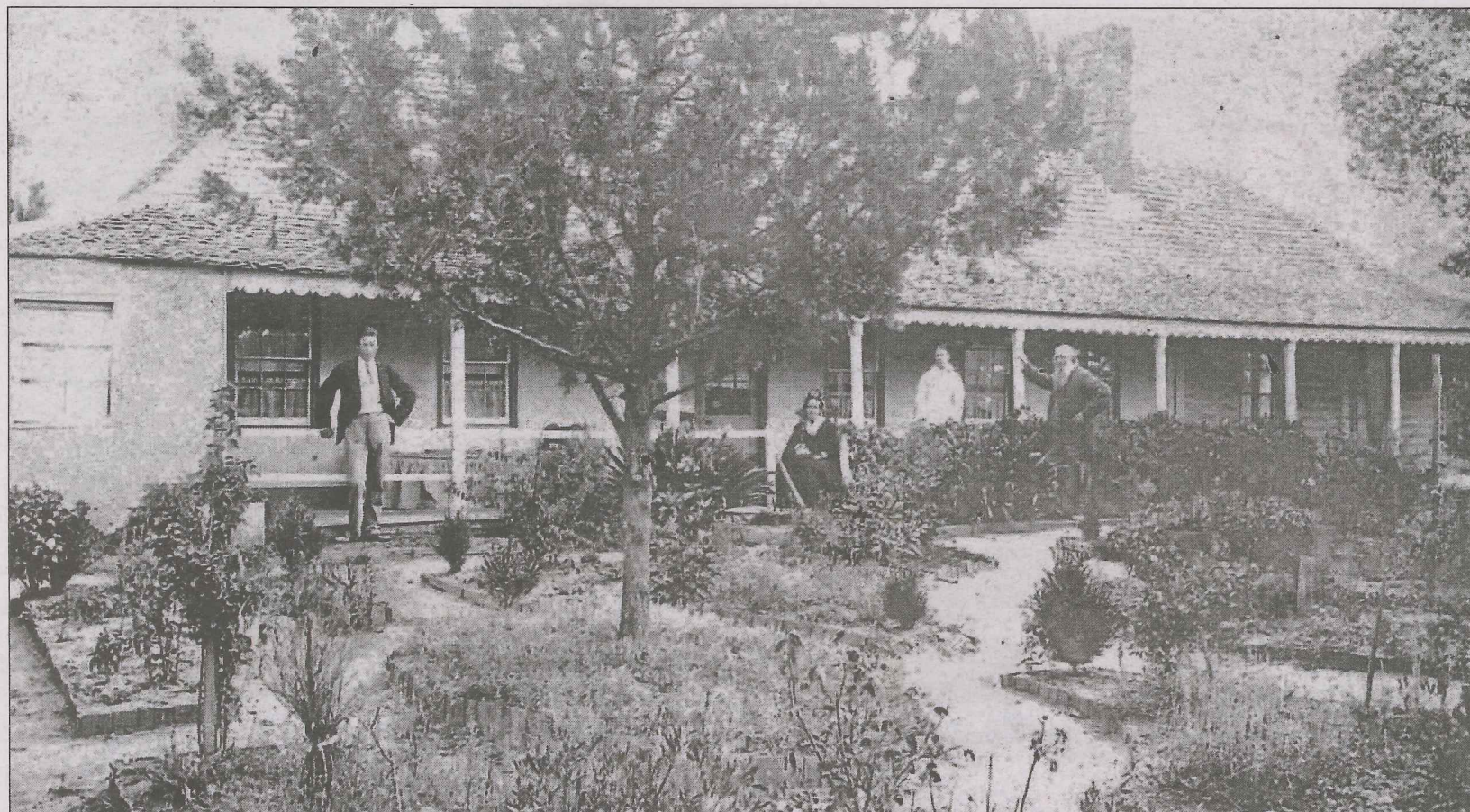


WEEKEND READING

At the Archives



BY WAYNE DOUBLEDAY



Ernest Octavius Thompson, Eliza Thompson, Laura Scott and Frederick Anslow Thompson at the Thompson family home – “Waterview”.
(CSU Regional Archives – RW5/18/469).

A father of the city

WHEN asked to nominate who was referred to as the “Father of Wagga Wagga” it is likely that most people would answer with a name such as Henry Baylis or George Forsyth.

Very few would offer up the name – Frederick Anslow Thompson, after whom Thompson Street is named.

As historian Sherry Morris asserts, “Tompson was one of the first to settle in Wagga and for 50 years worked tirelessly and unremittingly for its future. So great were his achievements and influence that he has, at times, been dubbed the ‘Father of Wagga Wagga’”.

Frederick Tompson, the son of convict Charles Tompson, first came to the area that was to become Wagga in 1832.

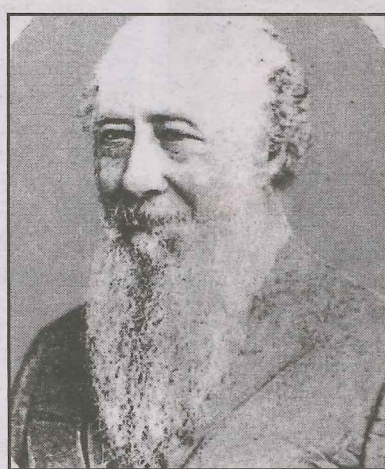
He and his younger brother (Edwin) were taking stock to “Eunonyhareenyha” station on the northern side of the Murrumbidgee River.

The following year Frederick married Eliza Esther Pearson in Windsor.

By 1840 the Tompsons were running 1200 cattle, 11,000 sheep, 30 horses and growing 20 acres of wheat at “Eunonyhareenyha”, making it the biggest station in the area at the time.

Some 17 free men, 11 convicts, three ticket of leave holders and two Aboriginal boys were all working on the station at the time.

In 1847 Tompson was one of the 16 licensed pastoralists from the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Districts who petitioned for the



Frederick Anslow Tompson, 1814 to 1884 (CSU Regional Archives – RW2893/8/259).

establishment of a Court of Petty Sessions at Wagga.

Tompson was appointed as one of the first magistrates of the district in June 1847, where he often sat on the Wagga bench with William Macleay and John Peter.

Tompson’s decisions on the bench were not always popular however.

He was heavily criticised in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Goulburn Herald* when he sentenced a shoe maker in Gundagai to seven days’ gaol for saying that his dog had a better appearance than that of the chief constable.

The depression of the 1840s hit Tompson hard and he was forced to sell “Eunonyhareenyha”.

In November 1848 he relinquished his role on the Wagga bench to accept the position of clerk of the petty sessions.

He was also appointed as the first postmaster in Wagga on January 1, 1849 (a role he held until 1858).

Due to lack of suitable accommodation in the fledgling village, Tompson decided to build his own dwelling on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River which he called “Waterview” (see above).

Tompson chose his own site for the house (near the present site of the Kilnacrott building in Sturt Street) and asked the colonial secretary if it could remain there even if it contravened the new town plan.

His request was granted even though Tarcutta and Gurwood streets had to be realigned to suit his application.

In addition to his official roles, Tompson also conducted a store in Wagga known as “FA Tompson & Co” or the “Australian Warehouse”, located not far from his new home.

To help facilitate business in the township, Tompson also established the first banking facilities in 1855 for the Commercial Bank of Sydney.

Having decided to make Wagga his home, Tompson worked continuously to ensure that the growing town had all the required amenities and services in place.

This included the building of the first school in 1861 on the site of the Riverine Club (corner Tarcutta and Sturt streets), the first Church of England Church constructed in 1860, the establishment of the first hospital, the formation of a mechanic’s institute in 1859, and the first substantial bridge over the

Murrumbidgee River at Wagga called the “Company Bridge” for which Tompson was a founding director in 1862.

Despite the social leadership and influence that Tompson wielded in Wagga, he was not immune to failure.

By 1869 his store was experiencing severe financial hardship to the point where his mortgagees foreclosed on all his assets, including his beloved “Waterview” and the block of land he owned (essentially the river frontage block bounded by Sturt, Fitzmaurice and Kincaid Streets).

He also faced stiff criticism and ongoing opposition from the solicitor William Willans and the editor/proprietor of the *Wagga Wagga Express* Samuel Hawkins.

Tompson was even forced to face charges (which were dismissed) of “horsewhipping” Hawkins, having been provoked by a defamatory editorial written by the latter.

Tompson’s luck took a turn again in 1870, when after the Wagga Borough was incorporated, he accepted the position of the first council clerk.

His service to the community also continued when he took on the role of coroner in October 1872, and he was also later appointed as secretary to the Murrumbidgee Pastoral Association in May 1874.

At the end of 1882 he retired from all his positions and made the decision to relocate to Sydney, where he later died of heart disease on May 8, 1884.

The CSU Regional Archives is extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of the 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 will be on April 5 from 10am to 3pm.

INFO

■ 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, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au, or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.