

WEEKEND READING

At the Archives



BY WAYNE DOUBLEDAY



In August 1897 members of the Wagga Odd-fellows finally won a battle they had been waging for quite some time – the opening of a new district in Wagga. The district included the Loyal Southern Star Lodge in Wagga, the Loyal Nil Desperandum Lodge in Junee, and the Loyal Sovereign Lodge in Coolamon. This photograph was taken to commemorate the creation of the new District of Wagga (MUIOOF) out of the Goulburn District. From the Wagga and District Historical Society collection RW5/555

BOOKS OF INTRIGUE

AN INTERESTING collection of records, recently arriving at CSU Regional Archives, are the minute books of the Loyal Southern Star Lodge No. 34. The earliest book in this collection dates from March 9, 1863, making it one of the oldest records we hold that was created in Wagga itself.

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ODD-FELLOWS

ODD-FELLOWS lodges have been in existence in England since the 1700s. At that time, there was nowhere other than the church to which people could turn to in difficult times. Members of these lodges pledged to put a few pence of their wages into a common pool which then could be accessed to help tide them, or their families, over in times of illness or if the breadwinner of the family died. Such lodges became known as Friendly Societies or Benefit Societies.

The Odd-fellows of Wagga were formed under the charter of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Odd-fellows (MUIOOF).

In 1810, members of The Odd-fellows in the Manchester area became dissatisfied with the way the Grand United Order was being run and formed their own independent order.

The first Australian MUIOOF lodge was opened in Sydney in 1840; branches grew rapidly, and more and more lodges opened throughout NSW.

The first meeting of the Odd-fellows in Wagga was on February 23,

1863. While we don't have a record of what happened at that first meeting, an article written by *The Wagga Wagga Express*, then reproduced in the *Goulburn Herald* states as follows:

"A new lodge of the Independent Order of Odd-fellows, Manchester Unity, to be styled the "Loyal Southern Star Lodge," will be opened on Monday next, at Whitehand's Royal Hotel, Bayliss-street.

We believe the ceremonies incident to the occasion, will be performed by Mr Alderman Middleton, of Albury, who has been deputed to officiate on the occasion.

Mr Joseph Emblen has, we learn, been nominated NG (the Noble Grand) of the new lodge.

As a benefit society, this order is not only one of the most extended in its operations, but also one of the most eminently useful of any of the numerous institutions of its kind."

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MEMBERSHIP

IN LATER years, it was remembered that there were 16 members who first joined the Loyal Southern Star Lodge. However, the first meeting recorded in the minutes only lists the following men attending as members of the new lodge: brothers Spencer, Fliener, McEachern, Irvine, Whitehand, Trollope, Johnstone, and Holloway.

Brother Hamilton was recorded as absent and it was proposed that John Perryman (a bricklayer aged 26) also become a member.

Joseph Emblen, it is assumed, must also have been present as NG.

Joseph Emblen was born at Westbury, in Wiltshire, England in 1828. He arrived in Sydney in 1849, aged 20, married at Lithgow, lived at Mudgee for a little while, then moved to Wagga with his brother, Jeremiah. They opened a blacksmiths shop on Gurwood Street. James Edney remembered him as "a very steady and hard working man".

Emblen was reportedly a member of the Loyal Sovereign Lodge in Mudgee in the 1850s so one would assume that it was somewhat due to him that the Wagga Lodge was established.

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TREASURY

CONTRIBUTIONS of members were taken at each meeting and paid into the lodge's fund. It was initially decided at the meeting on March 23, 1863, that the "pence money" was to be one shilling a week, but this increased as the years progressed.

The "pence money", as well as the entrance fee paid on admittance to the lodge, formed the basis of what could be then be made available in a member's time of need. The minute books contain lists titled, "Sick and Distressed," showing which members required sick pay, the number of days and the amount they were paid.

It was customary for the publican of the hotel where lodge meetings were held to be treasurer and it

appears that this custom was initially upheld in Wagga as Brother Whitehand is recorded in the minutes as receiving monies collected at each meeting.

Brother Whitehand was William Whitehand, publican at the Royal Hotel between 1862 and 1867.

The Royal Hotel was located on Baylis Street, (on the corner of Baylis and Forsyth, where the Sturt Mall is situated).

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ODD-FELLOWS HALL

WAGGA once had an Odd-fellows Hall in Fitzmaurice Street, with a lodge room in which the members of the lodge held their meetings. This hall began life as the Masonic Hall, built in 1881 on the ruins of a previous masonic hall, destroyed after a disastrous fire.

The Odd-fellows took it over in 1888; it later became known as the Oxford Theatre from 1923 until 1936. Some people may also remember it as the Jeremy, Brown and Cox building.

The old hall was eventually demolished on June 22, 1968.

Compiled by Jillian Kohlhausen

References: Keith Swan, *A History of Wagga* (1970); Sherry Morris's Biographical Index; *The Goulburn Herald*, 28 Feb 1863; *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 2 Apr 1887, 12 Aug 1897, 26 Aug 1897, 6 Apr 1923;

www.manchesterunitynsw.org.; CSURA Loyal Southern Star Lodge Collection No. 34, RW3090.

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. 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.