

Fallon Cellars Albury

Jan Hunter

Scattered around the Albury Central Business District are benches stamped 'Fallon Cellars Timber.' They are made from the beams and posts of the huge cellar belonging to James Thomas Fallon, where Quest Kiewa Street stands today.

James Fallon arrived in Albury in 1854 and, with his brother Patrick established a general store in Kiewa Street, south of Dean Street. James, active in the community, was elected mayor at Albury's first council meeting in 1859. He was part of the grand opening of the first Union Bridge in 1861. Five years later, he was one of a consortium of business men who commissioned the building of the paddle steamer, Cumberoona, to facilitate the transport of Fallon's growing wine production.



Fallon Cellars with the timber beams and columns.

The timber is now used for seating around Albury's CBD.

In 1867 Fallon bought out the failing Murray Valley Vineyard Association's property at East Lavington. Around the same time he purchased land at 550 Kiewa Street and built a wine store with a substantial cellar capable of holding 250,000 gallons of wine.

Fallon travelled overseas in 1874 and persuaded French vigneron, Leonce Frère, to come to Australia to make champagne. In January 1875 Frère laid down 800 dozen bottles which Fallon opened before the end of the year inviting residents to taste the results. Next year he laid down a commercial quantity but the temperatures were not cold enough and the whole vintage exploded. Nevertheless, James Fallon was recognised as the producer of the first champagne in Australia in Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Times, by J Heaton, 1879.

J T Fallon & Co vacated the Kiewa Street building in the 1960s. Later occupants included Frank Ross Motors, Dalgetys and the Twin Cities Post. Building alterations and fire damage rendered the building unusable and it was purchased by Albury Council for a car park. After all efforts to preserve the cellar failed, the twenty-eight timber beams and twenty-one columns, 140 years old, were removed from the cellars in 2005 and stored for later use and the site sold to Quest Apartments. The Fallon cellar timbers are now visible and in use as seating around our city.