

Early Business People of Lavington

Ray Gear

The discovery of gold at Lavington, earlier known as Black Range, in November 1851 initially did not attract diggers to the area. Nine years later population numbers on the field reached a point when business people began to take an interest in the area.

At the start of 1865 it was reported that around three hundred people populated the area and that, while a village settlement had not emerged, huts and tents where diggers lived were scattered north of what is today Kaitlers Road, along and between Lyne and Prune Streets. Amongst the buildings were various places of businesses including blacksmiths and butchers two important enterprises on a goldfield.

Known businesses were Baker and General Storekeeper J C Middleton; Storekeepers Barlow and Cooper, Ah Wee & Ah Cooney, Ah Kien Mun, Mr Edwards; Restaurateur Mr Moore; Butchers Brady's & Waite's and E A Curran; Butcher & Baker Matthew Bock. Bock was also a licensed slaughterman.

Three hotels also existed. These were: the *Empire* (Hector McDonald), *Prospector's Store* later known as the *Riverina* (John Barlow) and the *Black Range* (Edward Culnane). In mid-1865 the license of the *Empire* Hotel was transferred to Alfred G Sinclair.

Newspapers in September 1865 were reporting that the area's population was around three hundred, one third being Chinese. They also noted that two shoemakers had opened and that a gambling house existed.

Log huts in late 1865 were replacing calico and blanket huts and a village settlement was emerging where, "women, children and trim gardens were intruding into the landscape."

BLACK RANGE BAKERY
AND GENERAL STORE.

J. C. MIDDLETON begs to inform his friends and patrons and the public of Albury that he is now running his cart into town daily, and will be most happy to attend to any orders they may favor him with.

First-class Bread and General Groceries supplied at lowest possible rates.

J. C. MIDDLETON.
823 u

July 20th, 1866.

Albury Banner
August 11, 1866

E. A. CURRAN,
Wholesale and Retail Butcher,
BLACK RANGE.

236 u

1865

MATTHEW BOCK,
BUTCHER AND BAKER,
BLACK RANGE DIGGINGS,
ALBURY.

269 859

1865

ALFRED GEORGE SINCLAIR
Empire Hotel,
BLACK RANGE DIGGINGS,
BEGS to solicit a continuance of past favors.
WINES AND SPIRITS
Of the
BEST QUALITY.

443 879

1865

Towards the end of 1865 drought was being experienced and was not to end until mid-1866. Also, in mid-1866 Culnane's *Black Range* Hotel closed. It was described as fronting the Main Road in the centre of the diggings.

Mid-September 1868 saw the *Border Post* newspaper reporting that "the diggings had gone to the bad." It also saw George Willliott who took over the *Empire* Hotel license in 1867, close the Hotel and move to Jindera. In the following year John Barlow was selling his buildings including, his *Riverina* Hotel building. He also removed to Jindera later.