

The Glenmorus Mulberry Farm

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The Glenmorus Mulberry Farm was established by Thomas Affleck in March 1873. The site originally consisting of twenty acres was located some four miles north-west of Albury at the western end of Union Road. It was used for sericulture or silk farming, the first established in Albury.

Sericulture is the production of silk through the rearing of silkworms, a type of caterpillar that spins a cocoon which when unravelled can be spun into silk thread. Their preferred diet is the leaves of the mulberry plant.

Seen “as a means of employment for women and children,” silk farming was introduced into the Australian colonies in the mid-nineteenth century. An advocate for the industry who held several lectures in Albury was Sarah Neill of Corowa.

Born in Fifeshire, Scotland in 1828, Thomas Affleck and his wife Ann arrived in Australia in 1858 with their two daughters, six-year old Annie and one-year old Janet. They removed to Albury in 1868. It was not long after that Affleck brought into ownership of the *Border Post* newspaper that was established in 1856.

Within months after starting his silk farm, Glenmorus, he had eight acres cleared, grubbed and fenced. In September 1873 three thousand mulberry cuttings had been planted [*Morus* is the botanical name for the genus of the mulberry tree – so *Glenmorus* translates as ‘valley of the mulberry’]. It was described in December 1875 as “the principal sericultural establishment on the border.”



Janet Affleck (Albury City Council Collection)

In late 1878 however it was reported that silk farming to date had been “all outlay and no profit.”

At Glenmorus thirteen thousand mulberry trees were growing in November 1878, the majority being the *Morus japonica* species. Responsibility for management of the silkworms on the farm falling to Mrs Ann Affleck and Janet Affleck, the latter lady being a Certificated Sericulturist having been tutored by Sarah Neill at Corowa.

Between 1877 and 1881 Affleck won awards for his silk at exhibitions in Albury, Paris, Sydney and at the Melbourne International Exhibition.

In early 1881 it was reported that Affleck had eleven thousand trees from three to six years old in a ten-acre farm area. Later in the year, when worms were expected to begin spinning, a sudden change in temperature killed them all.

By the mid-1880s sericulture had ceased in Albury. Changes in temperature, bad grain, and the parasitic pebrine disease, brought about its demise.