

Bank of New South Wales/Kia Ora

Greg Ryan

In September 1856 Albury's first bank, the Bank of New South Wales, opened in the old Court House at the rear of the Post Office, "about where the post office stable is" rent free and with the permission of the Police Magistrate.

Mr John Walker Jones was appointed manager, on a salary of £400 per annum with an allowance of £1 per week for a servant and £1 per week for his horse.

Walker Jones was required to bring from Melbourne the necessary cash for the opening of the bank. Dr Arthur Andrews wrote "the creeks were all in flood and the roads nearly impassable. He, however, reached Wodonga safely, but in passing the Wodonga Creek the vehicle was capsized and the box containing the cash sank to the bottom of a deep hole, Darkness was coming on, and it could not be recovered that night. Mr Jones had to camp near and remain on watch all night and till midday next day, when the box was recovered. Fortunately its contents were none the worse for the immersion."

The bank purchased land in Townsend St and famous Sydney architect Edmund J Blacket (he also designed St Matthew's Church Albury and the Great Hall of Sydney University) was commissioned to "prepare a plan for a banking house with suitable accommodation for the manager."



The building as the Bank of New South Wales prior to the 1879 fire.
The side wall of the Imperial Hotel is just visible to the right.

Notices.

BANK OF NEW SOUTH WALES.—
A Branch of this Corporation will be opened at Albury, in the Colony of New South Wales, for the transaction of General Banking, on the 1st September, under the management of Mr J. Walker Jones.
J. BADCOCK, General Manager.
Melbourne, 29th August, 1856. 45 864 alt

The Age (Melbourne), Sept 2, 1856

The bank accepted tenders in 1857. Built using local granite for the Bank of New South Wales, costing £3,673, this lovely building opened on June 1, 1858 under manager John Walker Jones. The *Border Post* reported that “the building is completed in a very handsome style ... an ornament to the town and a standing monument testifying the value of Albury granite as a building material, and Albury workmanship.”

In August 1879, while manager Jones was on holiday in England, a fire started in the Imperial Hotel next door, destroying that building and spreading to the bank. Newspapers commented that of the bank “nothing now remains but the stone walls. It was completely gutted, with the exception of the strongroom.” Gold, notes, documents, books etc were recovered from the strongroom and “found quite intact.”

Restoration started in 1882 but by then the Bank of NSW had purchased George Day’s property and the bank moved to the site that Westpac Bank occupies (2020) in Dean Street. The bank retained ownership of *Kia Ora* until 1920.

The first reference found to the building as *Kia Ora* is in a *Border Morning Mail* advert inserted by Mrs Austin in December 1903.

Residents have included future NSW Premier and Federal Treasurer Sir William Lyne, Albury Mayor Alfred Waugh and builder of the Albury War Memorial, Thomas Bartleson (he added a front verandah in the 1920s).

Chenery brothers operated their Stock & Station Agency from the building in the late 1800s. In June 1908 it became home to the “Albury School of Music” under Howard Douglas Tracy, teaching piano, singing, violin, elocution and German.

Frederick John Delbridge operated from *Kia Ora* as a herbalist in 1920. He moved to Wollongong soon after the Albury coroner at an inquest into the death of a patient described Delbridge as “an imposter” with “no qualifications, imposing on the credulity of the public and charging exorbitant fees.”

Advertised for auction by Mrs Delbridge in March 1922, the property was described as a “Magnificent two-storey building. Eleven living rooms, sleeping-out rooms, bath, laundry, electric light, hot and cold water, gas, sewer, complete motor garage for two cars, man’s room, and outbuildings.”

The NSW Health Department completed an excellent restoration of the building in 1989 under heritage architect Kenneth Young. The verandah was removed, stone outer walls half a metre thick were repointed and scrubbed. The front doors were missing but original drawings were used to build replacements – the windows were original.

Sometime later *Kia Ora* again became a private residence.

IMPORTANT AUCTION SALE
Of
TOWN PROPERTY.
—
“KIA ORA,”
TOWNSEND STREET, ALBURY.
WEDNESDAY, 22nd MARCH,
At 3 p.m.
In the Premises.
ALF. MICHELL has received instructions from Mrs. A. Delbridge to Sell by Public Auction her very fine town property,
MAGNIFICENT TWO STOREY BUILDING
Eleven living rooms, sleeping-out rooms, bath, laundry, electric light, H. and C. water, gas, and sewer, complete motor garage for two cars, man's room, and outbuildings, land having a frontage to Townsend-street by a depth of 330ft.
Note Day and Date of Sale.

Albury Banner
March 10, 1922