

A J Brook's Federal Bakery

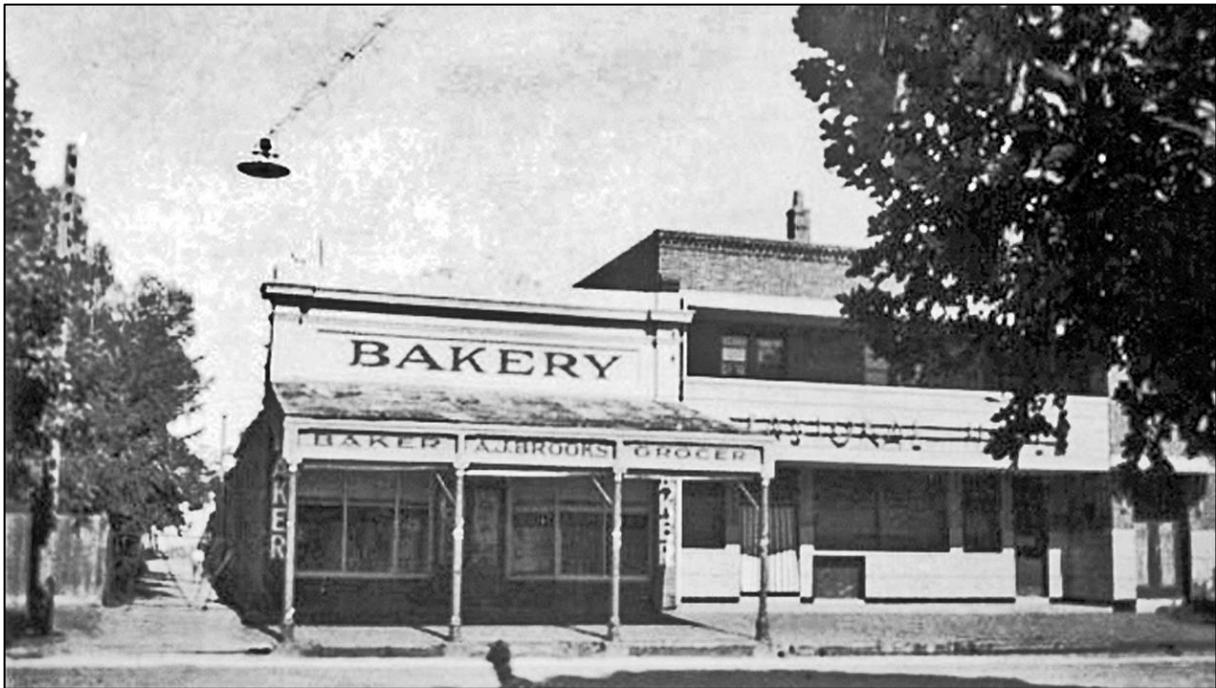
Greg Ryan

As told by Christine Brooks & Jean Kennedy in November 1995

Late in 1929 Alexander John Brooks moved to Albury to take over a bakery business at 478 Townsend Street close to the current loading ramp for Kmart, on the northern side of a vacant block where the Pastoral Hotel was later built.

It was the beginning of the Great Depression and Alex saw the move as a good opportunity for family members to find work. For many years the family was in debt to Burrows' Flour Mill who had lent them the money to start the business.

After staying for a while across the road in Kia Ora, Alex, with wife Annie and family moved into a house attached to the bakery. There was a wood stove in the kitchen, ice chest to keep meat, butter and milk fresh, no running hot water, a chip heater in the bathroom, and a copper to boil the clothes.



Brook's original bakery at 478 Townsend St, next to the Pastoral Hotel.
The KMart loading ramp now occupies both sites.

It was a family business, Alex senior and son Bob worked in the bakehouse, daughter Jean was in charge of the shop, not only selling bread, but groceries as well and son Jack delivered the bread in a horse and cart. The horses were kept in a paddock behind the house. Daughter Nellie did the housework and cleaning. Alex junior joined the move to Albury a couple of years later and he went into the bakery and Bob went delivering.

Reg Chisholm, who had owned a bakery in Jones Street joined the staff as a baker after Alex senior died in 1939. The dough was made by hand up until the early 1940s, when a new bakery was built and the dough made by machine.

During World War II, bread deliveries were zoned “in the national interests” to Albury Bakery, Brook’s, Wynne’s, Thiel’s, Bowen’s, Dickenson’s, Neale’s, Oakes’, Flower’s and Watson’s bakeries. Brook’s were allocated West Albury and Happy Valley (now Glenroy). These areas housed some of the poorer people of the town, with some having to give loads of wood or fresh eggs in exchange for bread. Bread was also sent to Bungowannah, Bowna and Wymah by contract carriers.

Each Easter hot cross buns were baked on Thursday afternoon after the deliveries had been made. The bread carters would then deliver them.

In mid-1960 Southern Border Bakeries took over Brooks’ Bakery. Bob joined the staff of Southern Border. Alex and his wife, Phyllis, purchased a bakery at Darlington Point NSW. In 1963 the property was sold.

Caption: Brook’s original bakery at 478 Townsend St, next to the Pastoral Hotel. The KMart loading ramp now occupies both sites.