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WENTWORTH TELEGRAPH REPEATER STATION

RUSHEEN CRAIG November 2012.

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McCauley's tender of £2400 accepted, but it was Gunn who did most of the work.
- Opening of the telegraph line at Wentworth to Adelaide.
11 September 1866.
- Wentworth Post and Telegraph Offices in one building. Telegraph officers.
"A Tour of the South", 2 November 1872.
- Criticism of Post and Telegraph building.
- Expenditure on Telegraph Station at Wentworth 1868-1880.
- Mail services with Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide in 1878.
Insufficient time to reply before return mail can result in it taking 14 days to get a reply to Sydney.
Also can mean that businesses have to reply on Sundays to get return mail in the dispatch for Adelaide.

CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WENTWORTH TELEGRAPH REPEATER STATION.

Original correspondence is held at State Records, Kingswood.
Wentworth Repeating Station.
Item 2/630A.

This is a summary of what is contained in this correspondence. Memos concerning action to be taken concerning each item of correspondence is also given.

McCauley's tender of £2400 was accepted, but it was William Gunn who did most of the work.

.....
13 Mar 1865.
Colonial Architect directed to prepare a plan for the Repeater Station at Wentworth.

Rough sketch of ground plan of a suitable building **for South Australian and New South Wales officers' residence.**

Memo:
13 Mar 1865 - Submitted for approval.
22 Mar 1865 - Plan and sketch; Estimated cost £3000.

22 May 1865 - This amount can be paid from the vote of £25,000 for the line. Ample funds.

23 May 1865 - Colonial Architect to call for tenders in ads in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne.

.....
18 May 1865 - Detailed estimated costs.

[Even more details are given on the actual correspondence. Note that this is just my interpretation of what is written. I know that much of this cannot be right - but just hope that it might be able to be better interpreted by someone who understands such matters. Rusheen.]

395 cubic yds Excavating £49-7-6

50 ...? reduced Brick Work £925

3 ...? reduced Brick Work in cement to Tank £66

No. 38 C. T. air gratings £4-15-0

100 ft Sup. Paving in Cement Tank (2 courses) £10

68 ft ...? 4 inch Earthenware Piping £6-16-0

200 ft ...? 6 inch Earthenware Piping £30

No. 2 Earthenware cyphous Piping 12/-

Mason

No. 12 chisled Door Steps 4.6 X 1.3 X 12 fixed £9

No. 14 p... of rubbed ... £10-10-0

No. 24 rubbed c... (11 ft 6??) long £18

No. 4 rubbed c... 3 ft 6 long £2-12-0

No. 2 Sink Stones for pumps 2.6 X 2. 6?? X 9 £2

No. 2 (carving ?) Stones 2..0 X 2..0 X 9 with rings £1-10-0

Carpenter & Joiner

40 3/4 ...? Sup. ceiling joists and plates 4 inch X 2 1/2 inch fixed £61-2-6

57 3/4 ...? Sup. Roofing with Rafter (battons & ... & ...) £317-12-6

40 ...? Sup. Flooring with hard wood (joists) and boards £160

360 ft ...? Verandah posts and plates £18

100 ft ...? Do. Wall plates £4-10-0

No. 8 curved ...? Rafters £7

750 ft Pine (Fascia) boards to eaves £18-15-0

100 ft Do. to Verandah floors £3-15-0

No. 1 pair ... cedar with ... £8-5-0

No. 2 Front House (Doors) complete £13-10-0

No. 2 Back Do. £13-10-0

4 framed Ledge doors to Stores £12

2 closets ... £3-10-0

2 ... doors £5

10 Inside moulded doors £47-10-0

6 £48

18 ... £135

... angle (blinds) fixed complete £2-10-0

No. 10 Chimney Pi..s £20

No. 2 Do. £3

568 ft Skirting £35-10-0
180 ft Skirting beaded 6 inch £2
120 ft Skirting Store Rooms £3
No. 4 Small trap ... £3
No. 1 Small trap Off... £1-5-0
No. 1 clock Turret or dormer? £15
Sup slab flooring to Stables £2
No. 2 seats to Closets £2-10-0
No. 2 mangers complete £2
Sup cedar ... £20
25 ...? Writing Slope in Office £2-10-0
521 ...? 5 inch ...? guttering complete £58-7-3
120 ...? 3 inch fu... down piping £12
No. 2 heads and Shoes? £3
112 ...? 4 inch ogee guttering £11-4-0
No. 2, 3 inch Douglass pumps each with 16 ft 2 inch Iron? piping £6-12-6
3 1/2 yds ...? paling fence 6 ft high £5-5-0
No. 14 Earthenware or Terra Cotta chimney pot £17-10-0
Drain and level or slope surface of ground and ground pathway £5
Plastering £80
Plumbing £40
Glausing? £25
10 - Curved corrugated gal iron verandah roofs £32-10-0
Painting £40

Total £2469-6-3

Add 20% for distance £490-17-3

TOTAL £2963-3-6.

Signed by ...? Collarten
Clerk of Works.
18 May 1865.

.....
???? 22 Jul 1865.

To: Colonial Architect.

No forms of Tender for Repeater Station at Wentworth have been received, but other blank forms on the subject of payment of contractor by cheque were received with the plans and specifications.

25 Jul 1865.

From: Public Works Office, Adelaide.

To: Colonial Architect.

Tenders forwarded for Repeater Station at Wentworth and handed to Engineers and Architects.

.....

27 Jul 1865

From: W. H. Smith, 4 Cremorne St., Fitzroy, Melbourne.

To: James Burnett, Esq.

Request information concerning proposed RS:-

- 1) Any line in district?
 - 2) Type of stone in neighbourhood?
 - 3) Likely that rock may be met with when excavating tanks?
-

15 Aug 1865.

Seven tenders received.

William Murray £2695

A. McCauley £2400

John Watts £3543-6-0

C. S. Baillie £2887

H. Cormack & Co. £3098-15-0

E. White & W. Gunn £2674

W. H. Smith £2690

Mr. McCauley's tender of £2400 being the lowest and reasonable is recommended.

17 Aug 1865.

.....

20 Jul 1866.

From John Ra..., Dept of Public Works

Requesting bond of contractor, from W. A. McCauley, for fulfilment of his contract to erect Repeater at Wentworth.

.....

22 Aug 1865

From: Under Secretary for Public Works.

To: Mr. McCauley.

Erection of the Repeater Station for the sum of £2400 to be completed within 7 months.

.....
31 Aug 1865

From: Dept of Works.

Returning plans and specifications of Repeater Station, Wentworth.
Colonial Architect.

.....
31 Aug 1865

From: John Williams, Crown Solicitor.

Transmitting Bond executed by A. McAuley (sic) and his sureties, I. Christian and E. Dalry, for fulfilment of his contract to erect the Repeater Station at Wentworth.

Plans and specifications signed by all parties and returned to Colonial Office.

.....
23 Dec 1865

From: Mudgee. Mr. A. McCauley.

Requesting all payments for his erection of Repeater Station at Wentworth should be paid to his solicitors Messrs. Stephen & Stephen of Sydney.

.....
28 Feb 1866

Mr. Richardson (William Lyle Richardson), J.P., Sub-Collector of Customs at Wentworth, should be requested to inspect the works being carried out by McCauley and certify their progress and the quality of the work.

.....
1 Mar 1866

Mr. McCauley requests £800. States that the walls of the Repeater Station at Wentworth are up and ready for the roof. He requests some person inspect and certify the work.

.....
5 Mar 1866

McCauley promised to make statement of progress of his work and subject the same to the Collector of Customs [Mr. Richardson of Wentworth] requesting necessary certificate. Work should be inspected as soon as possible.

.....
24 Mar 1866.

To: James Barnet, Esq., Colonial Architect, Sydney.

From: Wentworth, Darling River [presumably Mr. Richardson].

Regarding your request for me to inspect Repeater Station at Wentworth and report on progress.

States

1) Foundations laid in accordance with plan, as far as the floor line, and is of the best quality in material and workmanship.

2) Materials on hand:

37,000 bricks

50 (bags lime??)

13.357 feet Sawn Hardwood

And a small quantity of sand and cement.

The total cost of work as far as it has progressed, and the materials on hand, estimated at £450, but as the material is placed on the street and is held by and in the name of William Gunn, the
[Missing page]

.....
7 Apr 1866

Notation.

McCauley should be called upon to explain why work is at a standstill.

.....
21 Jul 1866

From: W. L. Richardson

To: James Barnet, Colonial Architect, Sydney.

I have signed a certificate for the progress payment of £540 for the Repeating Station at Wentworth in the course of erection. The application is made by William Gunn (agent of McCauley) who has done the work up to the present time. It will no doubt be handed to you by this mail.

Since writing to you on the 23 Mar work has been at a standstill for a considerable length of time but was resumed by Mr. Gunn several weeks ago and is progressing creditably.

I have been daily inspecting the work and condemning any work or material I considered not in accordance with specifications. On this subject I took it upon myself to sign certificates or make reports as required.

Front and side walls now raised to a height of 8 ft 6 ins, the (Partition?) and Chimneys 5 ft., and the back premises 4 ft respectively, taking the measurement from bottom of foundation.

Materials on the Ground:

16,000 ft of sawn hardwood

16,000 bricks

and 50 bags lime

and whole of doors, windows, frames, inside fittings &c.

Mention that, with the exception of the Fittings, **Mr. Gunn has been to the whole expense and he is not secured and were it not for him not a brick would have been on the ground and the work would not have been in such a forward state. I would strongly recommend that the work be taken out of the hands of the present contractor and handed over to Mr. Gunn.**

.....
21 Jul 1866

From: Police Court Wentworth

To: Colonial Architect

Report one bricklayer has been employed on the Telegraph Station after a total stoppage. ?? Hopes all bricks will be shortly available

I think in justice to Mr. Gunn, the landlord of the principal hotel at this township, I should not omit the instruction that it is his (directions?) alone that give ...verment oath the Wentworth people indebted for what has been done both here and on the lines to Adelaide and from the conversation I made a point of having with him this afternoon I learn that he has a claim of some £3000 ... Advance made by him

I would like to express the deep disgust felt by the inhabitants of this township at the disgraceful way in which the contractor has shamefully failed to carry out what he has undertaken to perform.

I have communicated with Mr. W. L. Richardson, Officer of Customs at this station, to whom your ... gentleman informs me he is about to send to you by tomorrow's post ... bring discredit on the contractor ...

.....
30 Jul 1866

From: Commercial Banking Co., Sydney.

To: James Barnett, Colonial Architect, Sydney.

Enclosed is an order from Mr. Gunn as agent for Mr. McAuley for £540 as an instalment of the contract for the Repeating Station at Wentworth. Please say if the money is payable and if the order and certificate attached thereto be sufficient to warrant its payment and if when the amount will be available.

.....
3 Aug 1866.

From: Edward Martin, Clerk of Works.

Evaluated work done on Repeating Station at Wentworth under McCauley under contract to erect Repeating Station (as reported by Mr. Richardson in his communication dated 21 July last).

162 1/2 Cub. yds Digging Foundations £21-8-0
24.154 ...? reduc Brickwork £442-5-8
4 cwt ...? £4
1 1/2 cwt ...? chimney (bars?) £1-10-0.

Total: £479-3-8.
Deduct percentage 1/5th - £95-16-8
£383-7-0.

.....
13 Dec 1866
Telegram, 39 words, £1-3-6.
From: Mr Gunn, **Contractor for completing Repeater Station**
To: Colonial Architect, Sydney.

McCauley stated that wooden sills were accepted for Repeater Station as stone not procurable. Is this correct [Memo - Yes] and have there been any other modifications of specifications since first issued [Memo - No]. Will you agree to iron roof instead of shingles [Memo - No].

.....
22 Dec 1866
From: Commercial Bank, Sydney
To: Colonial Architect
Mr. William Gunn of Wentworth, who is acting under contract from the Government for the extension of telegraphic communication, informs us that he is much hindered by the non-appointment of Clerk of Works; Requests you place an officer without delay.

OPENING OF THE TELEGRAPH LINE AT WENTWORTH TO ADELAIDE 11 SEP 1866.

From Correspondent, Wentworth, 12 September 1866.

Our township is starting into life. The events of yesterday would totally disprove the assertions of those calumniators (there may be such - I have never come across offenders so hardened) who would state that we are behind the times. At an early hour on Tuesday (11th) Wentworth was astir, flags floated from points of vantage, and each man donned his best coat in honour of opening the telegraph line, Mr. Towler, the Inspector of Telegraph Lines, and Mr. Squires, our Station master, who had arrived on the previous Saturday, had been both most indefatigable in the exertions to open the line by noon of the 11th. Too much credit cannot be given to these officers for the energy and activity which they displayed in successfully carrying out this desirable object.

At 12 sharp, on the 11th of September, telegraph communication was established between Wentworth and Adelaide. Complimentary messages were dispatched to the Governors and Commissioners of Public Works of New South Wales and South Australia. Replies were duly received, and at 1 we sat down to a sumptuous lunch given by Mr. Gunn, at the Crown Hotel [his], to mark this epoch in our history.

WENTWORTH POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICES IN ONE BUILDING Nov 1872.

In 1872 the Wentworth Repeating Station came in for some praise from the Correspondent for the Town and Country Journal. In his article as part of 'A Tour to the South', 2 Nov 1872, he wrote:

The Wentworth post and telegraph offices are in a good building, of brick, having a nice exterior. Wentworth is an important repeating station. **Mr. W. Camper** is post and telegraph master of New South Wales; and **Mr J. J. Watson** represents South Australia. **Mr Cunningham** is the telegraph line inspector.

CRITICISM OF POST AND TELEGRAPH BUILDING 1878.

The Post-Office is a small cottage which also serves for a Telegraph Office.

Its internal accommodation is said to be ample for the business to be contracted.

The external arrangements are on the contrary most inadequate. The only place of communication with officials is a small window with an opening about 9 inches by 12 inches, and the approach to that is along a passage where two persons of average size can barely pass. Into this there is the crush of the arrival of the mail, which renders it difficult if not dangerous for females to approach the delivery window. In fact I have heard strong men complain of the inconvenience they have suffered.

EXPENDITURE ON TELEGRAPH STATION AT WENTWORTH 1868-1880.

Expenditure on Public Works, Wentworth Electorate 1861-1880.
Colonial Architect's Office, Sydney, 16 Sep 1881.

[Town of Wentworth as distinct from Wentworth Electorate]

Telegraph Station.

Vote in 1868: £300, and Telegraph Vote.

Money spent:

1867 - £2,797;

1868 - £313;

1875 - £360;

1879 - £5.

Total: £3,475.

THE PRESENT MAIL SERVICES 1878.

There are two mails per week from Victoria, one direct and the other via Deniliquin, meeting the Sydney mail, which is only delivered weekly, and the mail from South Australia is also only once a week.

The inhabitants are now agitating for a bi-weekly mail from Adelaide, and I believe a memorial will be sent to the Postmaster of South Australia to request him to forward a mail via Morgan alias North-West Bend, which could then be conveyed either by coach or river steamer, so as to supplement the present contact, and obviate some of the inconvenience experienced by business people under the present arrangement, which is as follows:-

- 1) The Darling and Sydney mails, conveying the only mail from the metropolis, arrives on Saturday about 6 p.m.;
- 2) The Melbourne mail about the same time on Sunday, or a little later;
- 3) And the Adelaide mail is due at 8 o'clock p.m. on Saturday.
- 4) Then the first, viz. the Darling, leaves an early hour on the Monday morning,
- 5) And the Melbourne a little later.

This renders it a difficult, if not impossible task to answer correspondence by the return mail, which makes the course of the post nearly 14 days between this and Sydney.

- 6) Then the Adelaide mail, arriving at so late an hour on Saturday, is dispatched at 12 noon on Monday, so that Sunday is the only day on which men of business can attend to their correspondence.

It will be seen from the information already supplied, and by further statistics I shall be able to furnish as I proceed on my journey, that South Australia has far the largest interest in the development of this district, and that therefore a revised postal arrangement between Adelaide and Wentworth is a consummation devoutly to be wished for many substantial reasons.

This is the central Telegraph Station between the three colonies, and as such presents a strong claim for other modes of communication than the electric wire.

South Australian Advertiser, 2 Nov 1878.

WILLIAM CAMPER WHO SET UP AND RAN THE WENTWORTH REPEATER STATION FROM 1867 FOR 23 YEARS (1937).

By Watson A. Steel, a Member of the Royal Australian Historical Society.
Barrier Miner (Broken Hill), 8 Feb 1937.

Early Days of the Darling; Colorful Life of Oldest Pioneer, Mr. William Camper, J.P.

His Career and that of the Telegraph Line.

The oldest living representative of the pioneers of the Darling of the 'sixties is probably Mr. William Camper, J.P., the writer's neighbour, now residing in the suburb of Beecroft, between Sydney and Parramatta. He is also the oldest officer living who belonged to the first staff of the New South Wales Electric Telegraph Department when it was inaugurated in 1857, and when the first line from Sydney to Liverpool was opened in January 1858.

Mr. Camper was born in London on 2 March 1845, the son of Henry and Eliza Camper, and arrived with his parents in New South Wales in the ship Isabella Harcus in 1853. He is, therefore, within a few weeks of his 92nd birthday.

After his family made their home in Sydney he attended school at Mr. Keen's establishment where the present Prince Alfred Park now is, but was then known as "Cleveland Paddocks," Redfern. Among his schoolfellows was the late Archdeacon Boyce, afterwards for so long known as a social reformer and rector of St. Paul's Anglican parish, Redfern.

PAID 2/6 A WEEK.

On leaving school, William Camper on 8 December 1858, joined the railway service as a probationer at 2/6 a week, under Captain Martindale, R.N., who then held the dual position of Commissioner for Railways and Superintendent of Telegraphs, with Mr. E. C. Cracknell as assistant superintendent, both departments being in their infancy at that period.

The only telegraph line operating was the short signal section connecting South Head signal station with the Sydney exchange and Redfern Railway station. The southern railway had been built only as far as Liverpool and Campbelltown, 22 and 34 miles respectively from the capital.

His first appointment in the Telegraph Department was to Redfern in 1859 to gain knowledge of telegraphy, and later when the railway reached Campbelltown he was placed there as junior operator in charge. After serving for some time at Campbelltown he was sent to open an office at Kiama on the South Coast. In May 1862 he was transferred to Moama where he opened and organised another post and telegraph office, remaining in charge there until **March 1867, when he accompanied the assistant superintendent, Mr. Cracknell, to Wentworth to establish a border repeating office linking up with the South Australian, Victorian and New South Wales lines.** Wentworth was then the only town of any size or consequence on the Darling from the Murray junction to Bourke and there were no telegraph lines north of it.

Early Menindee.

"VILLAGE OF PERRY"

Menindee consisted of a few tenements, with a police constable, and a postmaster, who was also the hotelkeeper and storekeeper. It had a horse mail to Wentworth. The postal directories and land office surveys of 1866 refers to **Menindee as the "Village of Perry," probably because George M. and A. Perry held a pastoral lease near it.**

Early Wilcannia.

Wilcannia had a store and post office, with a few residents living at the foot of Mount Murchison; its chief claims to importance being that it was the **headquarters of the Crown Lands Commissioner of the Albert Pastoral District**, Mr. John Chadwick Moore, who fixed the site for a town in 1864. Until 1871 there was not a church of any denomination from Wentworth to Walgett, a distance of nearly 1200 miles.

Telegraph Service from 1872.

With the completion of the last section of submarine cable between Europe and Australia, and its connection with the overland telegraph at Darwin in October 1872, **a large increase in the volume of business resulted in the Wentworth office**, as all press and overseas messages passed through it to Sydney and Melbourne via Adelaide.

1890 Address on Camper's retirement (signed by 24).

After 23 years service at Wentworth in August 1890 Mr. Camper was transferred to Hay. His services to the town and district, and the high esteem he was held in by all classes of the community was recognised by the citizens who presented him with a handsome illuminated address and a purse of 89 sovereigns, and his office staff gave him a valuable case of cut-glass decanters.

The address was presented by the mayor, and many names of old Darling pioneers appear among the signatures. As they may be of interest to some of their descendants who still reside in the Barrier and West Darling district and read "The Barrier Miner," they are reproduced here:

John Leary (mayor),
C. J. McMahon (alderman),
Duncan Brown (alderman),
John Dunn (alderman),
H. J. Holding, J.P.,
Cudmore Bros. (Avoca),
Henry G. Price,
Joseph D. Woodhead,
William Gunn,

Z. and S. Burton (mail contractor),
Joseph Higans,
R. G. Chatto (Commercial Bank),
E. H. Durieu,
John Egg [sic] (Chinese merchant and steamer owner),
John Urquhart (Para station),
David A. Morgan (stock inspector),
Barrett and Wregord (Moorara station),
Michael Darchy (Tarcoola),
J. S. Ormond (Tapio),
J. Jack[a] (Mildura),
Mrs. M. A. Johns,
E. S. Davie,
William Bowring
and W. L. Higgins (hon. secretaries).

In **1875** Mr. Camper **married Miss Scott, of Adelaide**, who died several years since, leaving a family of four sons and four daughters.

50 YEARS' SERVICE.

After serving another 16 years at Hay he was promoted in 1906 to Wagga, whence he retired in 1908, from the service on a well-earned pension on completion of 50 years of strenuous and honorable duty.

Except for slightly impaired sight Mr. Camper is possessed of excellent health and vitality of mind and body. His memory is clear, and his conversations on the early days of the Lower Darling and the personalities whom he knew are most interesting to listen to.

Still standing over six feet he is wonderfully erect and active for his age. Always genial and cheerful, he still retains that characteristic quality which gained him such universal regard among all classes along the Darling 70 years ago, a readiness to assist any cause or any individual worthy of assistance.

I can speak from personal knowledge, for I resided at Wilcannia for over two years, 1880-1882, when Mr. Camper was known as one of the most efficient and courteous public servants in the Riverina.

Other Memories.

My father was police magistrate of Menindee, visiting Mt. Gipps when George McCulloch managed it, 1878-1879, and from 1880 to 1888 was police magistrate of Wilcannia, where he took his family there, and I accompanied him. As he held 21 different Government offices, and the Sydney Government would not provide him with clerical assistance he paid me out of his salary £78 a year and I lived at home. Otherwise he would not have been able to cope with his duties. When Mt. Browne goldfields was discovered in January 1881 the work at the Wilcannia office increased so much that a resident warden was appointed and clerical assistance was granted the P.M. at Wilcannia.

I knew all the early men you read about, the late Sid Kidman, Ted Dickens (I was at his wedding), Bowes Kelly, Resch, the brewer, Quins of Tarella, and a whole host of others.

Barrier Miner (Broken Hill), 8 Feb 1937.