



SWAN CREEK QLD



Name: Swan Creek School of Arts

Address: 6 Swan Creek Hall Road Queensland 4370

The Town/District

Swan Creek is the name given to a collection of hamlets in the Swanfels Valley of the Southern Downs region of the Darling Downs in South Eastern Queensland. It is about 18 km east of Warwick, the largest town in the district, and about 160km west of Brisbane, the State capital. It lies close to the creek which runs through the Swanfels Valley and then flows west soon to join the Condamine River, part of the Balonne catchment for the northernmost waters of the Murray-Darling Basin which covers much of south-eastern Australia. The settled area and the creek itself appear to take their name from the presence of swans that lived by the creek.

Swan Creek is one of the settlements that grew up when the vast Canning Downs Estate was broken down into smaller parcels of land. Each of these small clusters of habitation developed its own community, including providing the opportunities for education and social interaction that came from the School of Arts movement. Together with Yangan, Tannymorel, Mount Colliery, and Killarney, they make an interesting study to compare how each small town or village springing up on this former Estate espoused the principles of the School of Arts movement and how in many cases, the building which was erected in each location often remains still an important element of these communities.



Some History

The explorer, Allan Cunningham reached this area in 1827. He had travelled north from the Hunter Valley looking for new grazing land for the burgeoning wool industry. He found in this region a valley with good water supply, rich volcanic soil, good pasture, and abundant forests: everything the aspiring settler would wish to have.

Cunningham saw only glimpses of the indigenous population¹ and recorded in his diary: *We remained encamped for about a week, in which one solitary aborigine (a man of ordinary stature) was seen, and, when camped on the Condamine: Three natives were seen in the adjoining forest ground on the opposite bank, firing the dried herbage of these woods.*

The local indigenous tribes were the Kienjan, Cathabul, Jageia, and Garaomna³ people who spoke a common language, Wakka Wakka, Their ancestors had inhabited the region for about 40,000 years.

The first settlers to stake a claim to this rich farming land were the Leslie Brothers who arrived in 1840. The pastoral estate which they established they named Canning Downs⁴, a very large holding with a number of outstations. One was “Heifer” which encompassed the Swan Creek valley. The stock yards and house he established on the knoll where Alan Cunningham had camped in 1827 later became the site for further settlement¹. This was the settlement of Upper Swan Creek, later named Yangan. Further to the west, along the course of the fertile Swan Creek valley, collections of dwellings grew up which were to be called generically Swan Creek.

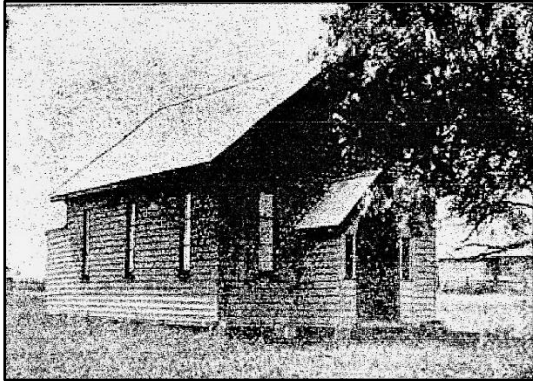
In 1847 the Governor of New South Wales asked Patrick Leslie to select a part of the property to divide into smaller allotments for a township, which was to be called 'Cannington,' although the name 'Warwick' was eventually chosen. Land sales were held in 1850, and the first allotment was bought by Leslie.

In 1859 the State of Queensland was created and the Canning Downs region came under the jurisdiction of the Queensland Government. With this came the decision to break up the larger pastoral holdings within the State. Hall¹ (p. 80) reports *that the Queensland Lands Department provided a large area of agricultural land in 1863, comprising part of the holdings of Canning Downs, Glengallan, Swan Creek and Campbell's Gully* for subdivision and sale. In 1868 a further decision was made³ to provide freehold blocks of up to 10,000 acres to encourage closer settlement.

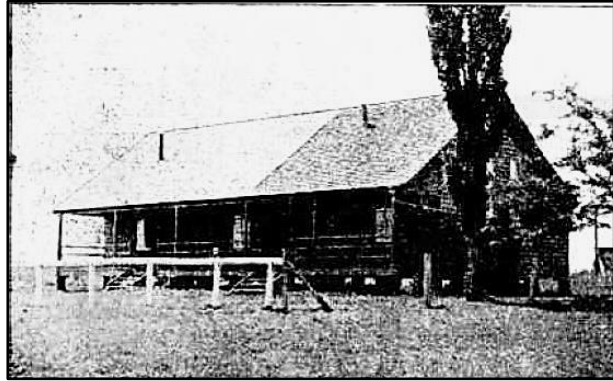
The land was cleared for farming and timber was plentiful. The wood they cut was mostly cedar and sawmills were established in 1855 by Thomas Hall's father to provide timber for the construction of the settlers' houses, barns, and other outbuildings. Because the land was rich, grains of all varieties were cultivated and the dairy industry flourished. Milk and other dairy products were transported to Warwick by horse and cart.



Hall¹ (p.25) does not mention the existence of a settlement at Swan Creek as such. He describes the view from Heifer Station (now Yangan⁵) in the following terms: *This place is now the beautiful valley of Swan Creek made up of a network of rich cultivation and dairy farms, with smiling homesteads on all sides, occupied by scores of families.* It seems that clusters of houses were built for the growing population in the Swan Creek area. By the turn of the 19th century the area supported three inns, three churches, a railway station, a cemetery and a school. Of the inns, two remain, Burndale⁶ and the White Swan Inn⁷, now private residences which are heritage-listed,



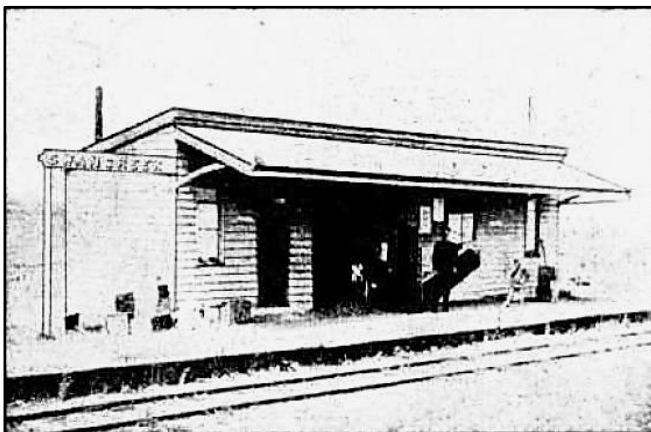
Church of England Swan Creek (1911)



State Primary School, Swan Creek (1911)

Photos: *The Week* 10 February 1911

The construction in 1879 of the Warwick to Killarney railway line⁸ which passed through Swan Creek, meant the settlement could readily transport commodities such as wheat, barley, oats, chaff, fruit, vegetables, potatoes, sheep, and dairy products to towns like Warwick and Toowoomba, and even further afield, to Brisbane. In 1862 Mr Affleck¹ (p.86), who had had an association with Hall's father in the building of water-powered sawmills, rented the Glenmore property in Upper Swan Creek and relocated sawmilling operations there. This enhanced the importance of the Swan Creek area as a transport centre. The transport of timber ceased in 1884 when the principal sawmill closed.



Swan Creek Railway Station (1911)

Photo: *The Week* 10 February 1911

Coal was another commodity which was exported from the region. Interestingly, the first steam engines used on the Warwick-Killarney line burned wood. But the sparks from the engines caused bush fires and pressure from the local population made the authorities convert the locomotives to be coal-burning. The coal however was imported from Ipswich and had to be hauled up the Great Dividing Range to Warwick. An expensive solution.

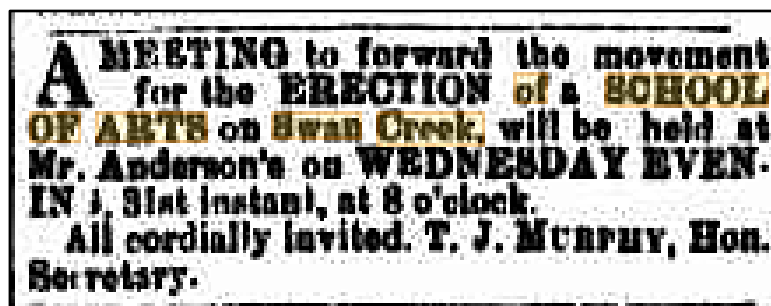


The railway also greatly facilitated the transport of perishable goods such as dairy products and fruit and vegetables to the major population centres of Warwick and Toowoomba. The line was closed on 1 May 1964.

The Hermitage Research Station, close to Swan Creek, was established by the State Government in the Swan Valley and opened in March 1897 to provide experimental development of new varieties of a wide range of cereal crops. As well, olive trees were planted and trials of schemes for mixed farming were undertaken. In 1910 apprentice farm training commenced, with the successful apprentices receiving further training at Gatton College in the Lockyer Valley at the foot of the Great Dividing Range. Gatton College is now a campus of Queensland University. The Research Station was closed in 1930 because of financial constraints imposed by the Great Depression. But it reopened in 1946 and remains open today (2016)⁹ and is involved in the education of school children in agricultural theory and practice.

Establishing the School of Arts

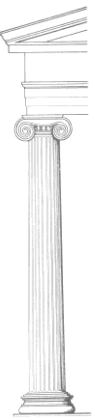
A notice in the classified advertisements of the local newspaper the *Warwick Examiner and Times*¹⁰ proclaimed:



▲ Extract from *Warwick Examiner and Times* (WET)
Saturday 27 July 1907 p. 8

Providing the necessary funds became a priority. The newspaper¹¹ reports that on 29 July 1908 a *euchre night and dance at a local school hall in aid of the School of Arts was held*. Thirty-five people attended. And after the *euchre refreshments which were supplied in abundance by the good ladies of Swan Creek were handed around*. When the *inner man had been satisfied dancing was resumed until half past two*.

Fund raising continued at a rapid pace. On 30 September 1907 it is again reported¹² *that a curio evening and dance was held at the Methodist School Hall*. Another such entertainment occurred on 9 October, this time at the State School, Swan Creek¹³. This was a grand occasion with 35 couples, most of whom took part in the euchre contest, playing until 10pm when the winning lady, Miss M O'Connor, received a prize of a silver-backed hair brush and the winning gentleman, Mr J Bourke of Freestone, won a shaving outfit. Booby prizes were presented—a squeaking doll for the gentleman and a tin whistle for the lady ...*which caused a good deal of amusement and noise*.



Then the school room was cleared and dancing commenced at half past ten and continued until midnight, when refreshments which had been prepared by the ladies were handed around. £6 was raised towards the building fund. Other similar events were to follow, held in venues such as the Swan Creek State School house.

The opening ceremony for the new School of Arts took place on 9 February 1909 and was reported¹⁴ the following Monday. Details of this ceremony are in the following newspaper clipping. In keeping with the general conviviality of the community, festivities followed the opening ceremony.

SWAN CREEK SCHOOL OF ARTS.

OPENING CEREMONY.

A very successful function, the opening of the School of Arts, Swan Creek, inaugurated on Tuesday last. The official opening took place in the form of a cold luncheon for the visitors and committee at 1 p.m. Among the visitors present were Messrs. G. P. Barnes, M.L.A. (who performed the opening ceremony), Hon. T. A. Johnson, M.L.C., P. Grayson, M.L.A., Hons. R. Kerr and D. Bottomley, M. Brewer, senr., W. Price, D. Hughes, D. Patterson, G. Booth, M. Christensen (President Freestone School of Arts), H. Hallman (Secretary Freestone School of Arts), A. Watt, Les. Watt, G. Cox, H. Free, and others. Apologies were received from Sir Arthur Morgan, Hons. H. B. Hay and M. Potter, Messrs. H. J. Shilliday and H. Elliott, who were unavoidably absent.

After the usual loyal toast the following were submitted and responded to:—"The Parliament of Queensland," "The Institution," "The Vis. Hons.," "The Prosperity of the District," and "The Ladies." The following were the speakers: Messrs. P. McMahon (who presided), Hon. T. A. Johnson, M.L.C., G. P. Barnes and P. Grayson, M.L.A., Hons. R. Kerr and D. Bottomley, Messrs. T. J. Murphy, T. Beckett, D. Hughes, T. Gottman, C. C. Anderson, J. Jacobson, M. Brewer, senr., D. Patterson, W. Price and H. Free.

After the opening ceremony a picnic for the children was held on the ground and an enjoyable time was spent. Light refreshments were served at the close of the afternoon's entertainment.

At 4.30 p.m. a rugby tournament was entered upon. Mrs. Jas. Campbell won the ladies' first prize, Miss Palmer (Freestone) second, and Miss Campbell the "bouby" prize. Mr. Applehill won the gentle first prize, and Mr. Arthur Jacobson the "bouby" prize. The hall was cleared at 10.30, when dancing commenced, and was kept going with vigor until the small hours of the morning. Miss A. Given capably officiated at the piano, kindly lent for the occasion by Miss G. Wilson. Mr. Geo. H. Campbell made an efficient M.C. The hall was packed to its fullest extent. The hour was in excellent order, and everybody appeared to have spent a pleasant night.

The School of Arts committee were congratulated on all sides upon the excellence of their building. The dimensions of the hall are:—length (including 100 ft. stage) 50 feet, width 26 feet and 15 feet walls; total cost to date, £200. The contractor, Mr. J. Southey, carried out his work efficiently and satisfactorily. He also deserves congratulation.

It is unnecessary to mention the individual names of the ladies who so kindly attended to the excellent catering, suffice it to say that all worked zealously and with a will to make the function the success it proved to be. The committee spared no pains to obtain a sound financial result, the net proceeds being approximately £20. There is still a deficit of about £25 on the building. The situation is good, being quite adjacent to the Swan Creek railway station.

▲ Report of the Opening Ceremony for the Swan Creek School of Arts

(Warwick Examiner and Times (WET) 15 February 1909 p.4)



The Building

The land on which the School of Arts is built is a ½ acre block purchased from Mr Bernard Hughes on 6 October 1908 for £16. The title deed issued on 3 November 1908 names Messrs T Murphy, D Paterson and Patrick McMahon as Trustees¹⁵. This block was situated conveniently near the Swan Creek Railway Station. Goods were transported from the farm to the railway station for distribution in far-away places and in that era farmers had to hitch up their horse and cart before making the slow journey from farm to station. The founding members thought that the proximity to the station might cause the farmers *to dally a little to read newspapers and the like* in the reading space of the School of Arts. As well, it was adjacent to the Warwick-Yangan Road and close to the intersection with the Jack Smith Gully Road which runs north to the settlement of Freestone.

The building was constructed of timber on a sloping site. The entrance to the building was through one large front doorway with double doors. The external walls were constructed of horizontal chamferboard planks with three sash windows set into each of the long sides of the building. In common with many houses in the region, the building was initially unpainted. A rectangular louvered aperture in the middle of the front gable was for ventilation purposes. The roof was and is still of corrugated iron and guttering now directs storm water to water tanks at the rear of the building. The dimensions of the building were length 50ft (including 10ft stage); width, 25ft; walls, 15 ft. The cost at the time of opening was £200. The simple style of construction is similar to buildings located nearby. (eg See above the photo of the Church of England and the School buildings).



School of Arts Swan Creek in 1911

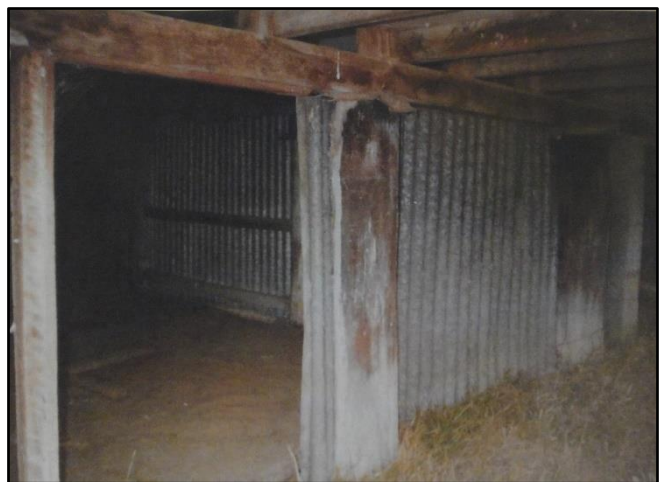
Photo: *The Week* 10 February 1911



The fall of the land under the building enabled the use of the area under the stage as a food preparation area when catered functions were held. The locals must have been a hardy lot in the early days of the Swan Creek School of Arts! The stage was constructed such that it was supported by the walls and not joists in the floor, and it was possible to stand upright under the stage area. This area was used primarily for catering, and the victuals and beverages were passed out through a door in the front of the stage to the patrons in the hall⁵. The only concession to comfort was a protective screen of corrugated iron stretched between the stumps (see below) presumably to minimize draughts. When the hall was modified to extend the dance hall new floor joists were installed, using sawn and milled timber and modern fixtures rather than rough-hewn logs. The area is now used for storage.



- ▲ External view of the corrugated iron screen protecting the area below the stage
- The new floor joists supporting the stage, now providing a storage area.



- ▲ South and east elevation showing the enclosed corrugated iron section in the middle at ground level below the stage area at the rear.
The ramp and deck on the eastern side were added in 2016.



In 1939 a supper room was added to the eastern side of the hall (the front faces north).

The recent improvements consist of an enclosed verandah on the eastern side the full length of the building and connected to the main hall by two large archways. The floor space available will be utilized as a card or supper room, 40ft. x 12ft., with movable tables down the centre. At one end is a ladies' dining room 12ft. x 9ft., and at the other a committee room 12ft. x 10ft. The new section is adequately ventilated by a large double door and six casement windows.¹⁶ The completion was celebrated on 12 January 1939 when it was reported that they now had a building which was a credit to the district.¹⁶

Further additions were made over time, especially to adapt to the popular use of the building for dances. Crowds of 400 or more attended functions at the School of Arts during the 1950s and 1960s. Alterations to the supper room on the eastern side extended the dance floor in 1995 with a new supper room added on the western side. A foyer extension which included toilet facilities was added to the front. In 2016 the committee raised \$32,000 of a total of \$38,000 to add an access ramp and deck built out from the eastern side to provide easy access and also increasing further the space available to dance patrons.



▲ Northern elevation.

The existence of rain water tanks underscores the fact that reticulated water was not available and that the building needed to be capable of satisfying the needs of hundreds of people on some occasions.

The walls of the extensions were clad with corrugated iron and painted cream. It is evident that the original building forms the core of the structure but the several extensions to cope with the increasing demands of the community have altered its form.



◀ Eastern elevation

In the foreground is the flag post and a cairn containing a time capsule to mark the demolition of the Swan Creek Railway Station, and the original sign from the Station. (R)

The eastern extension and the later ramp are evident.



An interior view of the existing hall (left) looking towards the stage from the lobby's entrance door, illustrates how the eastern wall has been modified to increase the area available for dancing. The change in the planking of the flooring is also evident.

Shown as well (far end, right) are the doors opening into the under-stage area. These are not the original doors. Flooring was installed at ground level under the stage and the space is now used for storage. Also to be seen to the left at the far end is a door which opens into the former Committee Room. This probably became the library/reading room



The original internal wall with exposed construction is opened out on the eastern side and lined with walls of tongue and groove boards. The former supper room now provides seating and frees up space for the dance floor.



Initially the building would have been illuminated with kerosene burning lanterns, later by carbide lights, and later still by a diesel generator. Mains electricity was not delivered to the Swan Creek region until August 1946 when supply was provided to the School of Arts, the Engineering Works, St Andrews Church, and the residence of the State School as well as some private dwellings.¹⁷ Connection to the pole from the School of Arts occurred in November 1946. It was reported at the AGM that electricity had been connected and the old plant was to be disposed of by tender¹⁸. Despite the cost of installing the electric lights, other maintenance issues, and the failure of some potential income earning activities due to flooding in the region, it was reported at the 1948 AGM that a small surplus was made in the year¹⁹.

The Honour Boards



The two Honour Boards (WW I at left; and WW II to the right) mounted on what was originally the outer wall of the hall.

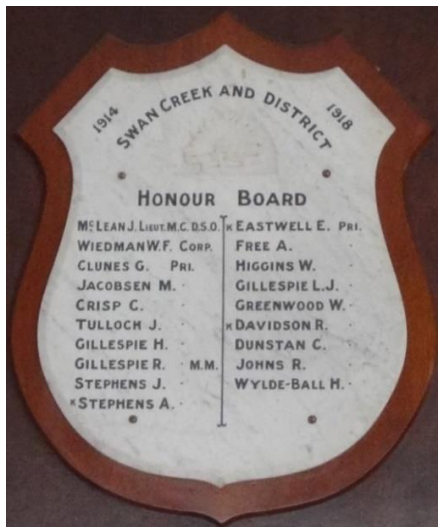
The interior was exposed construction, unlined and originally unpainted. The sash window in the middle of the photograph was one of an original three. The doorway at left was originally an external door; the one on the right was formerly another one of the windows. Both doors now lead to the supper room on the western side.

The building displays honour boards listing the men from the Swan Creek area who served in the two World Wars.

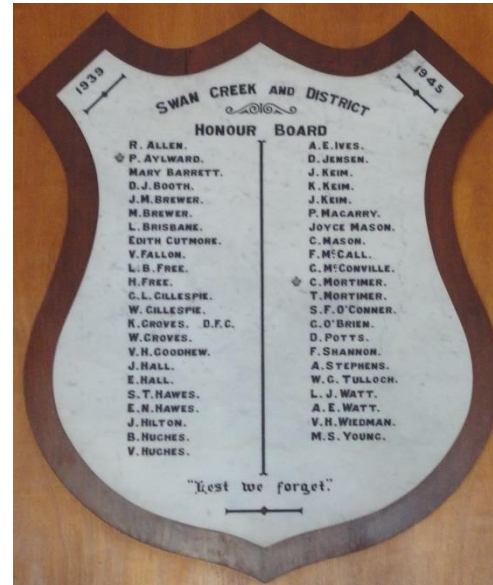
The boards on which the plaques are mounted are stylistically dissimilar. The World War I Board is the more ornate. It lists the names of 18 local men who served. Two lost their lives. It was unveiled on 17 May 1924 by Mr GP Barnes MLA. The World War II Board commemorates the 45 men from the district who served, of whom two lost their lives. This board was unveiled by Mr OO Madsen MLA on 12 November 1955.



World War I ▼



World War II ▼



The committee intends to surround the Honour Boards with photographs of those who served and is actively raising funds for that purpose.

Uses for the building

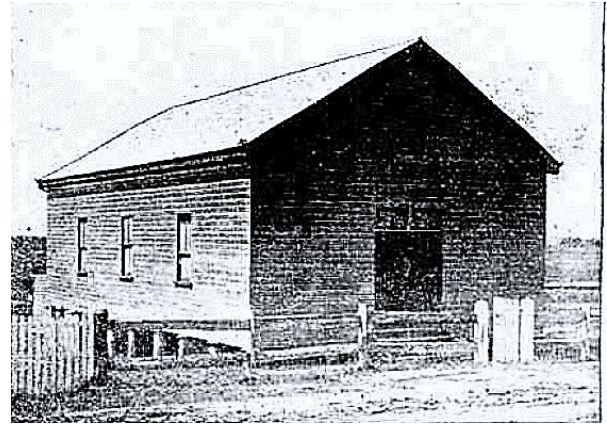
Before discussing the use of the Swan Creek School of Arts hall it is perhaps pertinent to comment on the differences between this building and the two School of Arts buildings at Yangan^{5,20}. The two villages are 7km apart, little distance these days but in 1909 this would have to be covered on horseback or by horse and buggy—a much slower journey. The two communities seemed to have had completely different approaches to specifying the requirements for their building. The Yangan buildings were built to have attractive facades (and indeed today they are visited by tourists because of their Heritage listing). This was bought at the expense of floor space and for ten years or more the committee at Yangan sought ways to raise funding to build a bigger hall or add to the building.

They apparently refused an offer from a Mr G Gamack who informed the Committee that *it was his intention to convert his large machinery depot into a concert hall and ballroom.....the hall will be 62 ft x 32 ft.* The President went on to say that: *A new hall is badly wanted in Yangan and whether it be the Oddfellows, the School of Arts Committee, or Mr Gamack will be the first in this field, it will be a forward move.*

No further information is recorded in later minutes or in the press, so it may be concluded that Mr Gamack's offer was not accepted, perhaps because of lack of community support. Hereafter the big functions, dances and socials in Yangan, including for the School of Arts, were held at the much larger Oddfellows Hall or even elsewhere, such as Swan Creek, affecting fund raising activities.



Yangan (2) opened 1912.



Swan Creek opened 1909.

The design for Swan Creek School of Arts building was completely different. It was a very simple basic design, unornamented and unpainted, delivered at a cost of £200 and free of debt at the time of the opening. The decision relating to the austerity of the construction suited the Swan Creek community at the time because their interests revolved about social gatherings such as euchre parties and dances, perhaps because settlement was more scattered. This demanded that sufficient space be available to allow these activities. The hire of the hall for social events was to help to keep the School of Arts financially viable for almost a century.

Library/Maintenance

The School of Arts movement grew from a desire of communities to gain an education, become informed about practical issues within their environment, and generally, to read in order to enhance knowledge and understanding. The library was a very important part of the function of Schools of Arts. In the accompanying reading room newspapers and magazines were made available. These came from places beyond the local community and usually included even overseas publications, usually from Britain. The existence of a dedicated library and reading room was regarded as being essential to the educational process. Together they aimed to provide a broader view of the world as well as offering useful information on matters of interest at all levels, as well recreational opportunities in exploring the world of literature.

At end of the 19th century, state schools had already been established in the Swan Valley for some fifteen years and the need existed to provide additional educational resources for young readers coming through the school system and to provide as well for the education and enjoyment of older readers.

At the Annual General Meeting on 30 August 1911²¹ it was reported that *the library has a good collection of books including the New Popular Encyclopaedia* (11 Volumes)*. It was noted at the AGM²² on 5 August 1914, at which there was a full attendance of members, that *few young people had joined and the subscribed member numbers were half what they were*



at the beginning. In 1915²³ it was reported that *the library had 420 books, a permanent caretaker was engaged, and the building should be painted.*

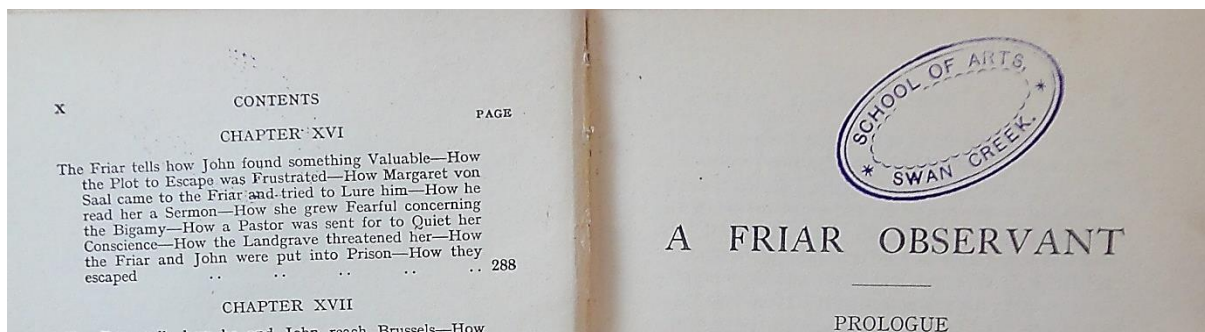
Information about the book collection, how it was funded, what acquisitions were made, and what problems they experienced, was not covered in the summaries reported in the press. It is very likely that they received the same (£1 for £1) government subsidy for the acquisition of books as other Schools of Arts^{5,20}.

An extensive article on the development of the Swan Creek area appeared in the *Warwick Daily News* of 1 September 1945²⁴. Included was a section on the School of Arts:

The Swan Creek School of Arts was established many years ago. The circulating library has ceased to function. This is a matter of regret because a library stocked with volumes written by leading authors provides members of the community with many hours of pleasant recreation besides being educational and instructive. Perhaps in a busy farming community, residents have little time to settle down to reading books. Reading the news published by daily newspapers is considered first preference with the majority of people engaged in occupations demanding of long hours of work. Nevertheless the Swan Creek School of Arts has been a great acquisition to district residents. It is the rendezvous for all meetings, social functions and entertainment held in the district.

Messrs J.E. Wiedeman (president), E. Price (vice-president), R.W. Oldham, T. Downie (treasurer), R.W. Gillespie (hon.sec). O. Cutmore, W.F. Wiederman, E.C. Anderson, W.O. McVeigh, R. Bartley, G.G. Leslie, A. Watt and D. Booth form a strong committee to carry on the administration of this worthy institution.

There is no record of what happened to the books: it seems that they were not sent to the Warwick public library. Older members of the Swan Creek community can remember reading books from the library in the late 1940s. They recall that there was always a book available on any subject that might be of interest. Indeed, they remember playing and reading in the hall whilst their parents played euchre under the stage. But they recall also that numbers of the books had become dilapidated.



A sample of what was available to be read in the library.

Note also the library stamp which would have been applied to each book acquired.



Some remnants of the library remain and are to be found on the original library shelves in the former committee room, which now acts as a storeroom. The set of the encyclopaedias, part of the original library purchase when the building opened in 1909, are still there and in good condition. A few other books exist but they are in very poor state.



The original set of the New Popular Encyclopaedia*

The set was acquired by the Swan Creek School of Arts in about 1911 and is still located on the shelves of the former library of the building.

*The encyclopedia was described thus:

The New popular encyclopedia, a general dictionary of the arts and sciences, literature, biography, history, geography &c/ issued under the general editorship of Charles Annandale [1843 – 1915] assisted by many specialists in the various branches of human knowledge.

Originally published in 1901 by the Gresham publishing company, it was issued in 14 volumes, with illustrations, some in colour.

It is interesting to note that this work has been reprinted and is available again for purchase. The new edition is described thus: *It has been selected by scholars as being culturally important, and is part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it. It has been reproduced from the original artifact, and remains as true to the original work as possible.*



Social History

The first social function reported was held on 24 September 1910²¹. This was a plain and fancy dress ball. The participants apparently entered into the spirit of the occasion, especially *Mr J Wiedman as Kakahoo of the Cannibal Islands, who was most admired. With his opossum tails hanging from his waist one would think that instead of eating human flesh he had feasted luxuriously on possum and kangaroo.*

In the next few years there were euchre parties and dances²⁵ and a concert was presented in support of the piano fund²⁶. From 1914 onwards functions supporting the Warwick Convent²⁷ began. It was reported *that the hall was tastefully decorated with flags and wattle and the whole presented a very pleasing spectacle.* Similar activities were to continue during this decade in support of a range of church building activities.

With the onset of World War I functions were held to farewell recruits to the AIF departing for training. Fundraising activities for such causes as the Red Cross Belgian Relief Fund²⁸ and the Ambulance Service²⁹ became regular events. Farewells were arranged for local officials who were leaving the district including a Mrs Frimcker who had been in charge of the railway station for three years³⁰.

As the war ground on to a closure, welcome home ceremonies were held for returning soldiers³¹. One soldier in particular was honoured: Cpl WF Wiedman, the first man from the district to enlist and an original ANZAC. He had been a train driver and enlisted at the start of the war. He was a member of the Light Horse, serving initially at Gallipoli and later in the Middle East. Wounded in 1918 he was repatriated to Australia. Members of the Wiedman family served as committee members of the Swan Creek School of Arts from 1909 until the mid-1950s.

The second decade of the 20th century proceeded in much the same fashion as the first. Dances and euchre parties were held to raise funds for the School of Arts, and the hall was rented out to church organizations, the Hermitage Lawn Tennis Club, election meetings, political parties, and for farewells. This increased usage by other entities meant that a public risk insurance policy to the value of £300 had to be purchased³².

There were renovations³³ to the building from time to time: WET (10 January 1924) states....

In order to celebrate the renovation and improvement of the Swan Creek School of Arts a euchre tournament and dance will be held tomorrow (Tuesday) night. A good floor and excellent music will provide an enjoyable night for patrons.

In the 1930s increasing demand for space resulted in further extensions and improvements. In 1939¹⁶ the addition of an enclosed verandah along the eastern side of the building gave space for a supper room, a ladies' room, and a committee room.

World War II had a major influence in the use of the building. The proceeds of many fund-raising activities were either given in total to or shared equally with the Australian Comforts Fund³³. One event³⁴, reported in the press on 27 July 1940, raised £30.



The nature of the social functions remained nevertheless, much the same, and fund-raising activities such as card parties and dances continued and sports days were held. Farewells for new recruits to the Australian Services occurred: Stanley Hawes³³ who enlisted in the Air Force, and Tim and Cecil Mortimer³⁵ who enlisted in the Army. For the Hawes farewell the host was the President of the School of Arts, Mr JE Weidman³⁶, brother of the first man to enlist from the district in WW1. After that a Soldiers' Farewell Committee was formed, the Chairman of which was for much of the duration of the war, Mr RW Gillespie.



Of interest are two small cups for boxing found in the former Committee room.

One was awarded to B Hughes. It is perhaps notable that a B Hughes is listed on the WW2 Honour Board. The other cup was awarded to J Hughes.

◀ **Cups awarded for boxing to J. Hughes (L) and B. Hughes (R)**

It should also be noted also that the land on which the Swan Creek School of Arts is built was bought in 1908 from Mr Bernard Hughes. The Hughes family continued its support of the institution.

At the conclusion of WW2 there were homecomings to be celebrated, notably that of Sister Coutts³⁷ who had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese in Rabaul.

1945 was to be a critical point in the history of the Swan Creek School of Arts because the circulating library, in many ways the heart and soul of all Schools of Arts, ceased to exist³⁶.

The connection of the hall to the electricity grid occurred in 1946¹⁸ and it was reported at the AGM that, despite the costs involved and other maintenance issues, the institution was still in credit.

The major social adjustments following WW II saw times that really were a-changing. In the late 1940s and early 1950s membership was falling, probably because post-WW II young people had a different view of life from their parents, and without the circulating library some of the older members would have questioned the benefits of membership. But then came dance crazes: square dances supplanted waltzes and the gypsy two-steps and similar "old time" dances. Later, in the 1960s rock-and-roll overtook and overran both. Attendance at dances could be numbered in the hundreds.

Alterations and additions³⁷ continued to add to the amenity of this building, for so long a centre of community life supported by its committee of management and its people.



Currently (2018)

The Swan Creek School of Arts still exists as a functioning entity. The following advertisement demonstrates that a young lady's traditional rite of passage into society still exists in these modern times³⁸.



The Swan Creek Hall will be throwing a Debutante of the Year dance on Saturday, August 29, 2015.

The Swan Creek Hall Committee wished to give local women the chance to don their debutante dress once again and enjoy a night of music, dancing and great food.

One important continuing social activity is a weekly dance night. This offers the opportunity for residents and visitors to learn or to practice old time dances and the traditional Debutante Ball features dances learnt at the weekly gatherings. So the Swan Creek School of Arts dances into the future with the same confidence that their great-grandparents and grandparents had when they raised money to build the hall more than a century ago.



Gentlemen.....Please take your partners for the “Pride of Erin”.



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I am very grateful to longtime residents of Swan Creek, **Kevin Stephens** and **Noel McConville** for sharing their recollections with me.

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Photographs

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Archival Photos: *The Week* 10 February 1911: National Library of Australia - <http://www.nla.gov.au/nla.news-page21122675>)

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