Chapter Three

'The value of things': patterns of trade and aspects of custom

In the wake of wider settlement and trade that prevailed despite the ongoing hazards of transport, the flow of exploration and pioneering throughout the central Queensland region abated by the 1880s. Rockhampton was the regional hub of the pastoral industry, an established river port for the beef and wool trades, an immigration receiving depot and a town that aspired to be the capital of a separate colony encompassing Central Queensland. Three decades after the ill-fated Canoona rush, gold mining in the Rockhampton region continued to attract diggers and local investors. Rockhampton trade facilities and financial interests provided impetus for various commercial enterprises that developed at Mount Morgan.

Whilst chapter two presented Mount Morgan from a burgeoning urban place in the late nineteenth century to a town in decline in 1927, this chapter presents the dynamics of its European trade and commerce that rose and fell on the fiscal tide of Company operations. It is argued here that the mine was the *largest* employer but that other local and primary producers, traders and commercial institutions competed for town custom outside the mine and its associated Company enterprises.[1] Issues addressed include the influence of Company on Rockhampton trade and the freights by sea and rail, competition for custom between the Company and Mount Morgan trade,

[1] *Pugh's Almanac 1900-1901,* pp. 806-807.

domestic imports to the town, trading ways and means, customer attitudes and the assumption of status and class by local petty bourgeoisie.

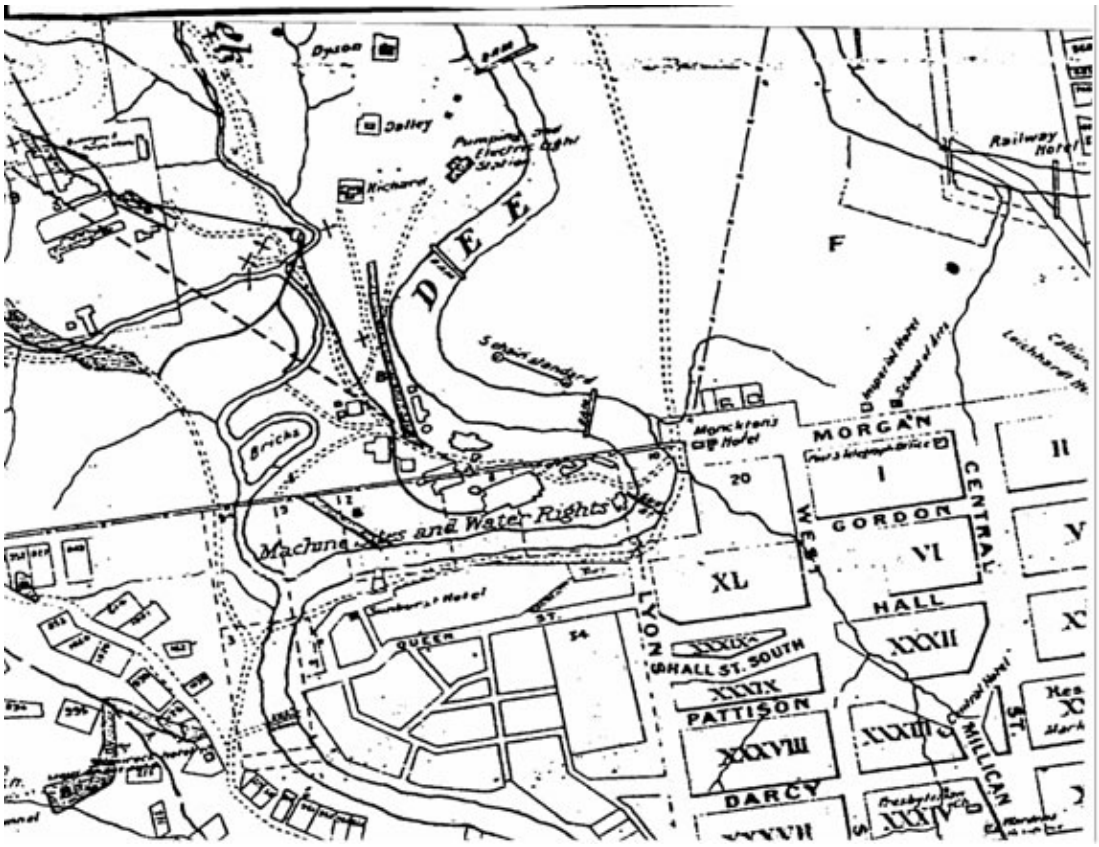
The stream of miners and others to Mount Morgan and environs included diggers at operations elsewhere in the hills and valleys of the range surrounding the great mountain.[2] They worked independently or as groups in scattered isolation, purchasing staple necessities at Rockhampton and otherwise living off the land. By contrast, diggers at the Company mine frequented the tents and huts of the first stores and shanties where enterprising traders who might offer credit until payday plied their trade on unsurveyed land.[3] Such were the roots of town enterprise. The cost of goods and services rather than wages earned indicated consumer consciousness. From the outset, diggers bought food at prices regulated by custom, although bargaining for scarce

Fig. 10. Moongan Hotel, c. 1897. This structure shows a single line of rooms with french doors, a similar construction to the Sunburst Hotel. A detached kitchen and stables are at rear. These buildings contrast with the large Razorback Hotel, where rooms extend along a passage from front to back, (see Fig. 1).

[2] F.W. Sykes, *A practical treatise of Mount Morgan: its history, past present and probable future,* Mount Morgan, 1888, pp. 37-52.

[3] Aleck Ivimey, *Rockhampton and Mount Morgan,* Rockhampton, 1888, p. 55.

commodities might bring prices that challenged the law of supply and demand.[4] Bullock and horse teams hauled town requirements, from essentials of primary produce to household goods. Carriers faced the constant challenge of the dangerous track, steep and narrow, that was life threatening to animals and drivers.[5] The stopping place at the crest of the Razorback Range was the Moongan Hotel, the last at Monckton's Hotel located by the river crossing to the mine and a short distance from Tipperary Point.



Map 7. Section, 1898: Broken lines indicate the track to Monckton's Hotel, Mount Morgan. Note branch track to mine across the river. The main track continued to Tipperary Point, crossed the river and continued south from the town.

The first traders in essentials of food and shelter were butchers. Cattlemen from south of the settlement drove stock to slaughteryards near canvas butcher shops. To ensure supply, cattle and sheep were driven from the west via the stock route and across

[4] F.L. Golding, Mount Morgan: fifty years 1927-1977, typescript, 1977, p. 2, Mount Morgan Historical Museum (MMHM).

[5] Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Limited, *Annual Report*, 1888, D15/271, CC/CQU; B.G. Patterson, The Razorback, typescript, 2 April 1952, pp. 11, 12, MMHM; Lorna McDonald, *Rockhampton: a history of city and district*, St. Lucia, 1981, p. 175.

the Dawson River south of Calliungal. Butcher Henry Aldridge came to Mount Morgan from Charters Towers to conduct his trade in a shelter of bough and bark. He moved later to the diggings at the lesser fields of Struck Oil and Dee rushes, but his trading premises and slaughteryards remained essentially primitive.[6]

Wandering stock might be found in any city or regional towns in Australia[7] more than half a century after herds were driven through Kentish Town near London in the 1830s and butchers slaughtered beasts at their shops.[8] By 1900, Mount Morgan hotelier William Monckton, and licensee Franklin at the Razorback Hotel conducted licensed slaughteryards near their premises. Moller Bros, family butchers, had yards near their shop and advertised that 'customers can have fresh meat punctually delivered at their doors daily'.[9] The Mount Morgan Graziers' Butchering Company Limited had three shops in Mount Morgan, serving customers from Tipperary Point through the town centre to Gordons Lane. The Graziers' Company claimed that all meat was examined by a government expert, and assured customers of the cleanliness of the establishments, 'to effect which neither time nor water is spared'.[10] Local butchers also slaughtered beasts at private licensed yards within the town boundary, for example, Leyden's yards were on the riverbank at Upper Dee.[11] Rhetorical press advertising proclaimed cleaning and sluicing at business premises where perishables were prepared and available for sale. Ironically, scant attention was paid to animal fouling of streets. Of more concern was the noise of cowbells, as cattle wandered freely in town during the day, out of hearing of their owners, but disturbing the sleep of shiftworkers.[12]

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6 Henry Aldridge, autobiography MS, 1927, held privately.
7 Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and spoilers: Australians make their environment 1788-1980*, Sydney, 1981, p. 123.
8 Gillian Tindall, *The fields beneath: the history of a London village*, London, 1985, pp. 128, 129.
9 *Mount Morgan Argus*, (*MMA*), 11 May 1900.
10 *MMA*, 8 June 1900.
11 Clerk of Petty Sessions Mount Morgan (CPSMM), Register of Licences, 6 January 1899, B/1301, Queensland State Archives, (QSA).
12 *Critic*, 12 April 1903.

As settlement expanded, the creep of human habitation reached the vicinity of these small scale abattoirs and surrounded them. When legislation prohibited the slaughtering of livestock within town limits, land gazetted in 1911 for slaughteryards that would remain under the control of the local authority were at Horse Creek, several kilometres out of town.[13] Such official action confirmed the urban character of Mount Morgan, in the light of generations of rural practice of private slaughter or village butchering of beasts. This practice continued in the surrounding districts of Mount Morgan; one surface boss at the mine purchased his family meat from a supplier at Upper Ulam, a mining settlement in the Dee Range east of Mount Morgan.[14] To the south of Mount Morgan was Wowan, a regional dairying district. By 1919, a local outcry occurred against a butcher whose slaughteryards were within three kilometres of the town and butter factory. He was charged and convicted for knowingly exposing for sale certain meat that had been in contact with bullocks infected with disease.[15]

Necessity as much as economic progress dictated relocation of businesses. The regularity of destruction of shops by fire was a typical hazard in terms of timber buildings built close together, and lack of a town water supply.[16] Some traders changed direction also; Jack Cunningham operated the Mount Morgan bakery at Burke's Flat, but moved to the new business centre by 1894 when, 'together with his indefatigable wife', he expanded to a bakery and confectionery business in large, airy buildings at the corner of Morgan and West Streets, in 'the heart of the town'.[17] An increasing number of 'universal providers' - general stores - operated in East Street and by 1900, some bakers had followed Cunningham's example and changed or diversified their enterprise. For example, S.L. Duus simply took over a business that traded as a universal provider.[18] Town trade was as diverse as service a century earlier at Kentish Town where artisans,

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13 Arthur Barnham, interview with the author, 24 April 1993, Mount Morgan Oral History, (MMOH).
14 Gertrude Marcombe, interview with the author, 23 March 1997, Oral History (OH).
15 *Daily Record* (*DR*), 15 August 1919.
16 Mount Morgan did not have a fire brigade during the period studied for this thesis.
17 *MMA*, 11 May 1900.
18 *MMA*, 8 June 1900.

professionals and others engaged in glass engraving, painting, laundry, dentistry and piano making.[19] At Mount Morgan, professionals and artisans included a dentist, piano tuner, photographer and music warehouse, cast iron fencing for cemetery graves and painting works. By 1900, twenty-seven categories of trade and commerce operated:

Aerated Waters	3
Agents	6
Assayers & Civil Eng	3
Bakers	4
Banks	2
Blacksmiths	6
Boarding Houses	10
Booksellers & Stationers.	4
Bootmakers	6
Builders & Carpenters	9
Butchers	4
Cabinetmakers	5
Chemists	3
Confectioners	3
Drapers, Clothiers	7
Fishmongers	2
Fruiterers	6
Grocers	9
Hotels	22
Medical Practitioners	4
Newspapers, Printers	2
Photographers	2
Plumbers	4
Produce Merchants	3
Saddlers	3
Timber Merchant	1
Undertakers	2

Table 1. Mount Morgan town enterprises, *Pugh's Almanac*, 1900.

In addition to sanitation and public hygiene regulations, the Council acted on legislation for prescribed hygienic standards in the preparation of food and drink for human consumption. By 1926, the installation of fly-proof cabinets was compulsory for all perishables, and water from wells - or the town standpipes - was prohibited from use in the manufacture of food or aerated drinks. Water was supplied from rainwater tanks

[19] Tindall, *The fields beneath*, p. 146.

fitted with purification filters.[20] Residents also installed tanks for domestic purposes, but the extent of filtration is unknown.

The categories 'boarding houses', 'hotels', 'grocers', 'butchers', included Irish proprietors, whilst 'grocers' and 'fruiterers' included Chinese stores. The early Chinese-Irish experience at Tipperary Point reflects spatial rather than social association. Within a few years of the first mining operations, Hop Kee operated a market garden at Burke's Flat, near the initial settlement at Tipperary Point. By 1890, he had a general store where he sold his garden produce. Adjacent to Hop Kee's shop were O'Dea and Allan's store and Yee Yok's fruit shop that was the front room of his two-roomed hut. These cramped buildings were opposite Joseph Moulds' Mountain View Hotel. Twenty yards away, O'Dea's dwelling was near a boarding house 'where a lot of single Europeans lived', and opposite was the shop of Fong Foo, a Chinese 'confectioner'.[21]

Statistics of Chinese on Queensland goldfields in 1910 listed 50 persons categorised as 'Gardeners and others, including women and children' at Mount Morgan.[22] However, a figure cited here of 75 Chinese at Mount Morgan during the period 1890 to 1910 is suggested as reasonably accurate, despite European spelling of Chinese names varying between records.[23] Some Chinese found employment as hotel cooks, but Chinese enterprise in the town during four decades included fifteen stores, including seven fruiterers. Their stores stocked fresh produce from seventeen market gardens where most Chinese lived and worked. An individual Chinese might operate several stores and a market garden.

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[20] Council, Sanitary and Health Committee (S&HC), Minutes, 25 November 1926, MMSCA.

[21] CPSMM, Depositions Book, 1 February 1892, CPS 7B/P2, QSA.

[22] 'Government Statistician's Report, "The estimated population of the several goldfields in the State on the 31st December 1910"', Table XI, Appendix 8A, *Queensland Votes & Proceedings* (*QV&P*), Brisbane, 1911.

[23] Arthur Christmas, History of the Chinese in Mount Morgan, typescript, c. 1994, MMHM; *Voters' List for the Western Ward of the Municipality of Mount Morgan*, Rockhampton, 1898, MMHM.

Arrant racism in colonial Australia manifested xenophobia promoted through the press, parliamentary debate and public oratory.[24] Bill Thorpe suggests in his challenging history of colonial Queensland that western attitudes defined Chinese as the 'racially and culturally inferior "other" in hegemonic discourse promulgated through classes at any level'.[25] A deep-seated fear of the alien's perceived 'corrosive moral viciousness' in early gold-mining years compounded with later concerns that Chinese posed a threat in terms of space and financial return, whether for wages or enterprise.[26] Rockhampton and Mount Morgan as elsewhere stereotyped Chinese as simian and at the perceived level of Aborigines.[27] Whilst Chinese at Mount Morgan in the late nineteenth century found strong European trade at their market gardens and stores, for most, the firmly drawn barriers of race and language confirmed them as outcasts in European social space and the mine workplace. Chapter four will address issues of law and order relating to Chinese at Mount Morgan.

Mineworkers, management and others in the town adopted anti-Chinese attitudes but confined aggression to scornful defamation. The Chinese presence continued in the 1900s, but the stringent conditions of the *Commonwealth Immigration Act 1901* ensured the gradual dwindling of the mostly male Chinese population. Anti-Chinese sentiment in Central Queensland remained trenchant however, not least through the local press. The vitriolic *Critic* challenged the moral rectitude of Rockhampton women of any class who conversed cordially and at length with Chinese vendors who sold fruit and vegetables door to door. The same issue of the press denigrated Chinese shopkeepers:

> Health Department officers are busy in the south west of the state and some of the Chinese alleged fruit shops in Rockhampton want shaking up. Fruit dusted down with a feather duster, used for what other purpose is unknown. Those who buy from such shops deserve what they get.[28]

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[24] Ross Fitzgerald, 'The Chinese in Queensland', *Quadrant*, no. 266, vol. XXXIV, May 1990, p. 38.
[25] Bill Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland, perspectives on a frontier society*, St. Lucia, 1996, p. 198.
[26] J.M. Graham, '"A danger that no language could magnify": *The Newcastle Morning Herald* and the Chinese question', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 69, part 4, March 1984, p. 248.
[27] *Critic*, 25 September 1903.
[28] *Critic*, 24 November 1903.

Notwithstanding, Chinese trade in fresh fruit and vegetables continued as their market garden produce graced tables at Mount Morgan as elsewhere. Yet the local press denigrated the Chinese presence in local business when describing the new premises of Bolton's Store:

> A beautiful building, replete with every modern convenience and crammed to the roof with new and up-to-date goods. Also, it is situated in close proximity to Ken Yen Kee's. It's another noble effort to whitewash a bit more of Australia.[29]

The ritual scorn levelled at Chinese by regional towns and press spurred the upsurge of 'white grown' produce from European market gardens. These developed primarily at Alton Downs near Rockhampton, at Gracemere and Kabra on the western line, and along the branch line from Kabra to Moonmera, in the shadow of the Razorback Range.[30] Moreover, as pointed out earlier, rail connection by 1911 to the Dawson Valley to the south-west consolidated coal mining and agriculture, and opened a market at Mount Morgan for fresh garden produce from the Valley. European concern for natural freshness and quality fuelled demand, while free advertisements in the weekly *Critic* social column declared that storekeeper Dorrell:

> lands big consignments…every week. White grown vegetables fresh daily. Soft drinks and finest confectionery on the market. All Fruits straight from the Growers. Remember Dorrell's the wholesale fruiterer.[31]

Despite the racist overtone in this paragraph, Ken Yen Kee prospered and opened two more stores, but his sensitivity to derogatory press is unknown.[32] Further, social change over time saw respectful reference to Ken Yen Kee in contemporary if patronising local history. His descendants might have sensed a hint of tokenism in the article written at Mount Morgan in 1973 that read in part:

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[29] *Critic*, 13 November 1908.
[30] George Cunningham, Stanwell, interview with the author, 10 December 1998, OH.
[31] *Critic*, 14 July, 21 July 1911.
[32] Christmas, History of the Chinese, pp. 2, 3.

> The hatred and mistrust which characterised the relationship between Europeans and Chinese on the goldfields at Ballarat, Bendigo and even at Crocodile Creek, [south of Rockhampton] was not evident in this town.[33]

As early as 1888, suggestions arose for irrigation for agriculture on land in the Mount Morgan district.[34] This did not occur, but Mount Morgan became the commercial centre for trade in outlying districts and settlements where pastoralism, agriculture and dairying developed alongside mining and its subsidiary industries.[35] Moreover, on reasonable country south of the town at Wura and Walmul, some families of mixed descent including European, Aboriginal and Asian established farming and dairying. However, their production did not equate with the level of European agriculture and farming south of Mount Morgan that received the impetus of rail extension to the Dawson Valley in 1911. This situation was similar to the verdant, fertile hinterland of Ballarat where, from the end of the gold era, many erstwhile mine workers, storekeepers and others farmed and marketed primary produce. Weston Bate declares in his study of Ballarat after gold that primary production included an incentive to locate fruit orchards on clay soils adjacent to old mines.[36] At Marmor, over the Dee Range and north east of Mount Morgan, agriculture and mining continued while the small settlement developed further during the Company's operation of a limestone quarry. Spreadborough's farm in the vicinity grew 'the finest paw-paws in Central Queensland'.[37]

Cowkeepers and milksellers, so identified, accounted for forty-nine licences issued to either males or females between 1890 and1908. A licence was compulsory in order to keep a single cow, whether for family domestic use or to supply neighbours and others. A small percentage of licences applied to town dairies, but despite successive

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[33] Nessie Chardon, Chinese influence on Mount Morgan's early history, typescript, 28 February 1973, p. 4, MMHM.

[34] Ivimey, *Rockhampton and Mount Morgan*, p. 39.

[35] *MMC*, 24 February 1914.

[36] Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and spoilers*, p. 70; Weston Bate, *Life after gold: twentieth century Ballarat*, 1994, pp. 26, 27.

[37] *Change Room Comments: the Works magazine of the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company's mine and Works*, no. 1, vol 1, October 1920, p. 2, Mount Morgan, M14/1566.18, CC/CQU.

legislation and local authority by-laws to control the sale of perishable goods, numerous unlicenced sellers also supplied milk to nearby householders and others. By 1918, Queensland legislation required regular inspection of food and perishable goods outlets, including Mount Morgan. Health Inspector John Hoad laid charges against milksellers who used open containers that exposed milk to dust during delivery to customers.[38] Outside dairies also provided butter. A large dairy operation at Gracemere was a family enterprise of mine director and shareholder Robert Archer. Their 'Archers' Dairy Butter fresh three times a week' found a ready market at both Mount Morgan and Rockhampton.[39]

By 1900, women conducted most of the nine boarding houses, albeit some operations tended to come and go. For example, poor hygiene at Mrs. Coloquhon's boarding house, 'near the Queensland National Bank' [Morgan Street] and a robbery at Mrs. Bury's boarding house in Gordon Street north of the town did little to reassure the public of satisfactory standards at these establishments. However, Mrs. J. Woods advertised her 'Star' boarding house 'next to the *Argus* office' in Morgan Street, offering board at £1 per week, and assuring readers that 'the whole place has been thoroughly cleaned'.[40] Mrs. Evans' Railway Boarding House was located alongside the line and near the Railway Hotel that opened before the line to Mount Morgan was completed.

The railway that was essential to the mine was also the trade lifeline for local merchants. Despite town concern, the Department of Railways decided, typically, in terms of railway depot and workshop space, to locate the station away from the trading centre. Hotel buggies met trains, and town cartage of rail freights was a new enterprise. However, whilst the railway served the town and district, with 5 071 passenger bookings in 1907, the road to Rockhampton remained the awful Razorback track,

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[38] CPSMM, Bench record and summons book, 13 November 1918, CPS 7B/S8, QSA.
[39] *Critic*, 11 January 1907.
[40] *MMA*, 4 May 1900.

unused by most and rarely maintained by local or state authority.[41] The Mount Morgan mine received vast tonnages by rail compared to rail freight to the town. Moreover, the increased demand for copper in World War I saw Mount Morgan production boosted to greater tonnages. Paradoxically, passenger returns increased for a time when men left Mount Morgan to join up, and some families left the town for the duration.

Mount Morgan Railway, Freight Report, 1908			
received		forwarded	
Company	22 127 tons	Company	585 tons
Town	937 tons	Town	82 tons[42]

Table 2. Rail freight and passenger returns, Mount Morgan, 1908.

Local enterprise was dependent throughout on the economic stability of the Company. Industrial conflict closed the mine for the year of 1921 and many left the town, causing rapid commercial decline. Frequent rail services soon fell away and demand for rolling stock diminished. Therefore, Mrs. Evans' substantial boarding house lost custom as railway workers were dismissed or relocated to another line.

A constant, highly competitive liquor trade flourished at mining towns where populations increased rapidly.[43] However, no hotel was perpetually lucrative at Mount Morgan, given the number and fluctuating standards of establishments. Their trade was also affected by population change and availability of work in the town. By 1900, with twenty-two hotels and six wine saloons operating,[44] the local authority refused licence applications for proposed hotels, declaring that existing premises catered adequately for the population.[45] The constant change of licensees at Mount Morgan, not only within the town, but also those who moved between the town and Rockhampton indicated

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[41] The parlous state of regional roads after railway connection remained a perpetual issue in Central Queensland.

[42] *MB*, 8 September 1908.

[43] A.E. Dingle, '"A truly magnificent thirst": an historical survey of Australian drinking habits', *Historical Studies*, no. 75, vol. 19, October 1980, p. 240.

[44] *Queensland Government Gazette* (*QGG*), 1900, no. 14, vol. LXXIII, pp. 109, 111.

[45] *Morning Bulletin* (*MB*) 10 July 1896.

inter-town trade connection and customer influence. For example, W. Crowe advertised his years of experience as an hotelier at Mount Morgan when he took over the Argyle Hotel at Rockhampton. Even when he moved on to the Windsor Hotel, Crowe continued to advertise his Mount Morgan connection.[46]

Strong competition between licencees saw hotel advertisements offering 'clean accommodation', 'spacious balcony rooms', 'an excellent table' and 'best wines and spirits'.[47] Establishments might be promoted as 'clean', but few advertisements mentioned a standard of hygiene. Hotels varied in size and appointments, but most provided space at the rear of the premises for horses and stabling. On the scale of quality service, large establishments in the centre of the town offered facilities where, by tradition, male associations and fraternities held meetings and social functions. These activities ranged from formal meeting and discussion to an illuminated address or entertainment from the floor in songs and verse, the latter hosted by the hotelier.[48] On the lower scale of service, some concentrated on bar sales, with perhaps a billiard hall and wine saloon attached to or near the hotel premises. Six billiard rooms operated in Mount Morgan in 1900 compared to seven in Rockhampton.[49] Enterprising publicans who moved to other hotels renamed their new premises in the process; for example, by 1908, James Stack, of the old Sunburst Hotel, Tipperary Point, moved to the more prestigious Leichhardt Hotel in the centre of town. His brother John, late of the Golden Spur Hotel, Baree, took over the Sunburst and renamed it the Exchange.[50]

The earliest pubs and hotels sold spirits, and three wine saloons functioned in the Tipperary Point area alone. However, for quantity sales and turnover, beers soon became more than a novelty, their market overcoming the illegal and suspect

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[46] *MMA*, 12 April 1900.
[47] *MMA*, 11 May 1900.
[48] *MB*, 22 February 1909.
[49] *QGG*, 8 August 1900, vol. LXXIII, no. 14, p. 112.
[50] *Critic*, 2 August 1908.

distribution of bulk spirits, an issue to be discussed in chapter four. Conversely, as some beers deteriorated during storage periods, drinkers became wary of poor quality. Licensed victuallers reassured patrons publicly of the purity and wholesomeness of new beers; for example, a news item promoting Abbotsford as 'a beer especially for this climate' and claiming that the working-man would not suffer ill effects from the brew, appeared with the advertisement :

> Abbotsford beer, brewed by publicans for publicans, on tap at leading hotels in Rockhampton and Mount Morgan. Obtainable at Calliungal and Queensland and National Hotel, and Stacks Exchange Hotel.[51]

Trade in accommodation and meals perpetuated the entrenched cultural tradition of provision of food and shelter for casual and permanent guests. By the late nineteenth century, hotels that replaced the inns and shanties of earlier years were licensed to operate within the conditions of Queensland legislation. Public houses were required to remain open during gazetted trading hours, a regulation that applied even if, as Tindall points out in relation to Kentish Town, during development and extensions to buildings, hotels might be 'left amid acres of churned mud'.[52] At Mount Morgan, trade continued during alteration or extensions. Further, licensees required permission from the court to be absent from the premises even for a single day, and must name another to take charge of the establishment during the licensee's absence.[53] By 1908, the change in liquor trading hours meant hotels closed to casual drinkers on Sundays, but might serve paying guests. This brought immediate and typical public reaction, not only from local imbibers, but hoteliers also:

> To cope with Sunday hotel closing,
> Abbotsford beer will be sold here
> Every day of the week except Sunday,
> So make it all right to buy on Saturday night
> Enough beer to last you till Monday.[54]

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[51] *Critic*, 27 November 1908.
[52] Tindall, *The fields beneath*, p. 147.
[53] CPSMM, Deposition Book, 15 August 1898, CPS 7B/P4, QSA.
[54] *Critic*, 13 November 1908.

John Tucker took over the licence of the Calliungal Hotel in 1911, declaring through the press that he 'had taken a grip on the management' of the most popular house in the town and that it offered 'every comfort and convenience'. Whilst Tucker's wife conducted the domestic and dining arrangements of the hotel, his added incentive for trade was the latest telegraphic sporting information received through Rockhampton.[55] Yet by 1925, and despite the threat of legal proceedings, Tucker's widow ignored local authority notices to renew the urinal trough and downpipe at the hotel.[56] Her inaction was probably a reflection of decline at the mine and town, for, by 1927, general deepening of the economic depression and closure of the mine saw traders' expenditure on sanitation and maintenance cease. This simply compounded the general problem of inadequate hygiene at commercial premises.[57]

Hotels and boarding houses became the main diningrooms until tearooms gained popularity and reflected social change. Women who were 'respectable' did not frequent hotels, but for those who could afford the cost, the growing popularity of the teashop provided refreshments and a place for social interaction. Such non-gender specific establishments suggest a form of the traditional 'tea meeting' popularised in Central Queensland by some associations including the Independent Order of Rechabites, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union.[58] In a six-day working week at Mount Morgan, not all businesses closed in the middle of the day and merchants or employees might frequent tearooms during the 'dinner hour'. The A.B.C. Refreshment rooms operated by 1907,[59] while locally produced goods and drinks were the mainstay of business at Mrs. I.E. Banks' 'new and up to date tea and soft drink rooms' in East

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55 *Critic*, 3 May 1912.
56 Mount Morgan Municipal Council (Council), Minutes, 23 September 1897, 14 June 1898, Mount Morgan Shire Council Archives (MMSCA).
57 The legal consequences of failure to observe by-laws to overcome poor public sanitation and hygiene are addressed further in chapter four.
58 *CQT*, 14 September 1889.
59 *Critic*, 18 August 1907.

Street.[60] When a Council by-law permitted such establishments to remain open after normal shop closing hours, trade extended to cater for evening walkers who bought papers that arrived by the late train, and for film 'interval' periods and local dances. Mrs. Stokes conducted the Dainty Little Pie Shop next to the Olympia theatre in East Street, opening for light lunches from 12 noon until 2 p.m. and in the evening for light refreshments from 8 p.m. until midnight.[61] By 1913, the Arctic Cafe in Morgan Street was 'cheek by jowl' with chemist Hempenstall on one side and tailor Sid Gray on the other.

In addition to Rockhampton aerated waters, vendors sold locally manufactured drinks: J.V. Hennegan was a brewer in town who in 1900 manufactured an entirely new 'seasonable' soft drink from a recipe imported from another brewer. A similar venture two years previously was unsuccessful for Hennegan, but his new 'Ultrya Cocktail' became popular. His manufacture to marketing of the entire product took place at Mount Morgan, bottles blown at the factory, contents brewed and the label design 'a work of art'.[62] Hennegan was a competitor of Butler & Childs who manufactured and marketed under the 'Boxton' label a range of 'cordial and special drinks' including Lager Ale, Dandelion Ale, Horehound, Tonic, Kola Champagne, Ginger Ale, Lemonade and Ginger Beer.[63]

The newsagency business was a profitable enterprise and offered upward mobility for the proprietor.[64] The newsagent's image of heightened literacy accompanied press distribution and sale of published literature. Newsagency licences ensured a regular income, carried goodwill and were limited in number for any town. Those connected with the press and newsagencies included Sam Lee, E.H.L. Eastwood, Charles Briggs,

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60 *MB*, 8 September 1908.
61 *Mount Morgan Chronicle* (*MMC*), 1 June 1917.
62 *MMA*, 4 May 1900.
63 *Pugh's Almanac*, 1900-1901, pp. 805-806.
64 E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class*, London, 1991, pp. 679, 689.

John Geddes Hay and Jens Lundager. The diversity of their enterprises ranged from newsagency-bookseller, newspaper owner, photographer and other agencies including musical instruments.[65] However, small general stores throughout Mount Morgan also sold newspapers. By 1908, four suburban outlets operated for the *Capricornian*, and thirteen for the *Critic* including four at Baree.[66] In 1911 at Rockhampton, seventeen stores were newspaper outlets.[67] Mount Morgan newsagents sold a variety of magazines, mostly gender specific and marketed in about similar quantities. These were distributed not only in the town and district, but also through newspaper post to the Dawson Valley and western Queensland.

The bootmaking trade was essential in town development, but by comparison with the newsagency business remained low on the social scale. The trade seemed committed to the class that Rev. Samuel Marsden in 1820 equated with criminality, declaring that the thief 'had been' raised as a 'shoemaker, taylor[sic] or barber'.[68] Responsibility and permanency of residence brought respect and although some trades might not be lucrative, income that was sufficient to support a family elevated the status of an artisan. Rising unionism found much support from the trades of bookmaker, tailor, barber, carpenter, blacksmith and stonemason, but the self-employed might appear suspect to unions and unionists. In the manufacture and marketing of footwear, work boots were commodity constants. At Mount Morgan, the mining environment destroyed footwear into rotting leather and rusting boot nails, whether miners worked above ground in areas of mud or chemical leaching, or in the hot and humid conditions underground where water usage decreased dust pollution. Some young Mount Morgan bootmakers remained in the trade, but many others, including J. (Nobby) Tuesley, used their bootmaking years to mark time whilst awaiting the opportunity to work at the

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65 *Critic*, 5 December 1913.
66 *Capricornian*, 4 January 1908; *Critic*, 20 November 1908.
67 *Capricornian*, 24 March 1911.
68 Scott Brown, 'The clothing trades in colonial New South Wales: a study into the status of tailors and shoemakers in colonial New South Wales', *Perspectives on Australian history*, Internet Family History Association of Australia, February 1999, pp. 1, 4.

mine.[69] Another was Charlie Shannon who recalled that both his uncle and father made and repaired miners' boots at their shop 'over the hill on the way to the mine'.[70] This was at Tipperary Point, where the Shannons belonged to the close-knit Irish community. The family was profoundly anti-conservative, their Labor leanings correlating perhaps with the seminal unionism of the bootmaking trade.[71]

Edgar Foreman conducted 'universal' emporiums at Rockhampton and Mount Morgan, the latter occupying one of the largest buildings in the town. The extensive boot and shoe department operated only at Mount Morgan, where the vast array of footwear included more than 62 styles: 17 for men, 25 for women, 15 for boys and girls and five for infants. Foreman's kept large stocks of 'miscellaneous' footwear from slippers to goloshes.[72] However, their Quaker co-operative ethic was evident in their prices set lower than those of competitors and their trade for cash only. Foreman's did not employ bootmakers, but Hy McLean was a town bootmaker whose most successful products were his hand-sewn 'Linda' Blucher (green sole) boots for 7s.11d and 8s.11d a pair, 'the easiest and best wearing Working Boots ever introduced to Mount Morgan miners'.[73]

Mount Morgan historiography concentrates on perhaps one or two individuals in relation to a particular trade or profession. One such was Jens Hansen Lundager, mentioned in chapter two and above. As the first professional, official photographer for the mine who conducted his own photography and newsagency business in the town, Lundager entered the fourth estate as journalist and leader writer of the *Mount Morgan*

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[69] Marcombe, 23 March 1997, OH.

[70] Charlie Shannon, interview with the author, 8 October 1992, MMOH. Shannon, a retired tradesman carpenter at the mine was in his 80s when interviewed. He was the most forthright of many unionists amongst forty-two interviewees.

[71] E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class*, p. 284; Graeme Davison, *The rise and fall of 'Marvellous Melbourne'*, Melbourne, 1978, p. 62.

[72] Edward Foreman, *The Edward Foreman Almanac: Direct Importer and Universal Provider*, Mount Morgan, 1906, pp. 47, 48.

[73] *Critic*, 5 July 1907.

Argus. Graeme Griffin's insightful thesis of Lundager suggests he was a Labor radical.[74] However, while the mine hierarchy ignored Lundager's politics, they criticised the Labor leanings of employees. Frederick Wham became mine photographer after Lundager, and other photographers established in the town.[75] Local operations survived the infiltration of outside agencies like the International Studios of Sydney that opened a Mount Morgan agency in 1911 but closed after a short period despite undercutting town prices.[76]

Charles Briggs, mentioned above, was primarily an auctioneer and commission agent who used handsome and expensive press advertisements to ply his trade. Perhaps this prompted his own press to tout him as 'knight of the hammer'.[77] The interest in urban land boomed at Mount Morgan by 1905, when Briggs was an alderman. He became mayor later, his terms of office doubtless advancing his local status and his enterprise in real estate. An erstwhile lay preacher and seeming devotee of community interest, Briggs served on committees for the School of Arts, Central Boys School, and Technical College.[78] From 1900, he operated the weekly *Mount Morgan Argus,* located next door to his auctioneering and commission agency that adjoined the Argus Printery, another Briggs enterprise.[79] However, as will be seen in chapter four, the consequences of his gregarious journalism revealed the character flaws behind his public persona.

With the exception of a few enterprises that included the press, ties of common interest connected the mine to outside contractors, traders and merchants. Contractors and other self-employed were in a position to work unregulated hours, but outside markets and economic circumstance affected trade and custom. Other forces, including

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[74] Graeme Griffin, Photographs of old Mount Morgan and its mine: a study of the historical and cultural context of a photographic archive, vol 1, 1987, pp. 62, 66, MA thesis, Murdoch University, WA.
[75] *Critic*, 25 August 1911; Mercer family papers, 1900-1920, Rockhampton and District Historical Society, (RDHS).
[76] *MMA*, 11 May, 8 June 1900.
[77] *MMA*, 6 February 1900.
[78] *MMA*, 4 September 1908.
[79] *MMC*, 11 October 1894; F.L. Golding, Alderman Charles Briggs, typescript, October 1982, MMHM.

the licensing court, exerted considerable control. Licensing was a legal requirement for most trades, but payment of a fee in order to operate was a contentious issue and a threat to enterprise for many.

Licensed industries included timber getting, in which cutters hauled the forest bounty to the mine timber mill. The local timber industry flourished at a time when devastation of the natural environment received scant thought and rare public comment. Timber getters included those under contract to the mine as well as outsiders. They tended to work in remote locations and in an enterprise that was barely lucrative. Many were charged and fined regularly for working without a licence. Given the one guinea fee, and that the location of logging suggested the unlikelihood of detection, this was probably enough incentive to forego payment of a licence. For example, George Curtis, 16, cooked for his father and brother, timbergetters, at their Oakey Creek hut south of Mount Morgan. Curtis senior and his elder son worked at a camp nine kilometres distant. Three times weekly, George took their meals for two or three days. Whilst at the camp, he carried tools from tree to tree at the felling site about one kilometre from camp.[80] Charged with timbergetting without a licence, George, his father and brother received a fine of £5 each and costs at the Mount Morgan Court of Petty Sessions.

By 1896, the mine sawmill cut hardwood at the daily rate of 8 000 super feet, including round timber for shafts and tunnels and more than 2 000 shingles for buildings.[81] At the peak of the timber industry in the early 1900s, some 150 timber haulers were contracted to the Company.[82] These probably included those teamsters who transported loads of charcoal processed in the bush. This commodity was much in demand for industrial purposes in the later nineteenth century, and mine management

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[80] CPSMM, Deposition Book, 22 November 1898, CPS 7B/P4, QSA.

[81] Frank Cunningham, Mount Morgan mine horses, typescript, 1974, p. 2, MMHM. Frank Cunningham snr. supervised stabling, care and use of the horses from 1909 until 1928, when the horses were sold after closure of the mine.

[82] John Kerr, *Mount Morgan gold, copper and oil*, St. Lucia, 1982, p. 78.

brought Italian immigrants to Mount Morgan to produce and supply charcoal for the mine. They worked in gangs and on contract, operating within a ten-kilometre radius of the mine and moving through Mount Victoria, Trotters Creek, Charcoal Gully and Dee Range as they selected and felled timber to be burned in pits. About 100 bags of charcoal equalled five tons, the loads transported to the mine on flat-topped drays.[83]

Timbergetting for the mine declined after twenty years of constant supply to satisfy the seemingly insatiable appetite of the mine for construction timber and fuel. The focus of supply shifted from 1905 when coal replaced billet wood as the principal fuel for the mine. Supplies of the fossil fuel were imported at first, brought up the Fitzroy River by freighter to Rockhampton and consigned on rail to the mine. However, as pointed out in chapter two, the railway extension from Mount Morgan to the Dawson Valley in 1911 saw the district's coal industry increase. In 1921, the Company acquired the Baralaba colliery in the Valley and railed coal direct to Mount Morgan. The extension of operations increased the town's connection with Baralaba and stimulated local enterprise at the coal settlement.[84]

At the expense of the mine labour force, large and small traders and outside contractors, the greed of mine management brought profit to the Company from small scale trading. One such was the sale of surplus timber left from the vast quantities used at the mine.[85] Although locals gathered firewood from the bush, progressively, the mine mill supplied town households. Deliveries in 1920 exceeded twelve hundred loads of firewood, each weighing approximately one ton and priced at 14s. Compared to town tonnage and load prices, the mine price undercut the two local wood merchants by almost 100 per cent.[86] Some timber getters supplied a town timber yard, so the industry, *per se,* operated at three levels, production, wholesale and retail.

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[83] William O'Brien, Some notes on Mount Morgan, typescript, n.d., p. 3, , MMHM.
[84] A.A. Boyd, A history of Mount Morgan, typescript, c.1936, p. 16, D15/309.2, CC/CQU.
[85] Sykes, *A practical treatise on Mount Morgan*, p. 29.
[86] MMGMC, Firewood sales, 4 February 1921, D15/281, CC/CQU.

The use of horses as the main form of personal and regional transport was significant to economic and social life in the nineteenth century and early 1900s. Horses were valued and valuable. Whilst feed and paddocking of the animals was essential, horses might go missing if not hobbled. A reward of £2 was standard in 1888 and remained so for two decades. By contrast, the serious offence of horse stealing brought a reward of £50 on conviction of the 'stealers'. Horse-trading was sound business. Rutherford's Horse Bazaar at Rockhampton was the major dealer in Central Queensland and provided the Mount Morgan Company with saddle horses for the use of mine supervisors at the mine site, and coach horses for general manager, directors and important visitors.[87] At the mine, and until tram and rail lines were installed, horses were used for haulage, not only of timber, but also to haul trucks of ore from the underground stopes to ore passes, trucks of molten slag from the furnaces, and to manoeuvre heavy machinery into position at the surface Works. The Company purchased draft horses, some with Suffolk and Clydesdale bloodlines and bred in Rockhampton or western Queensland. The Archer family at Gracemere supplied horses for the Australian contingents during the Boer War and by 1907, Archer sold draught horses at £5 to £8 each to the Company 'where there is a fair demand'.[88]

Not all mine horses were heavy stock; the replacement of male truckers with pit ponies to haul ore trucks from underground was a cost cutting method introduced in 1916. The care of mine horses was essential and expensive. Three sets of stables operated over time, the last constructed in 1919 at a location within two kilometres of the mine site. Grazing did not sustain mine workhorses. Outside trade benefited with Company purchase of feeds from Rockhampton primary produce merchants in ever-increasing quantities and cost, the goods brought to the mine by rail. By 1905, the number one rail line to the mine branched off near the town station and later, the

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[87] Cunningham, Mount Morgan mine horses, p. 5.

[88] R.S. Archer to A. Hughes, 31 July 1907, Letter Book 1904-1912, Archer Collection, K/1014, Mitchell Library, (ML).

number two branch line extended from a junction at Walterhall. Each extension was less than two kilometres. The store for grain and chaff railed direct to the mine was a Works building where bags of chaff were unloaded and the grain discharged from rail trucks and fed by bucket elevator to a silo.

The influence of the mine on the general economy reached far beyond the local scene. Data prepared by the company in 1919 and cited below claims an umbrella of

Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Limited.

Statement No. 1

Number of persons dependent on Company's operations		
QUEENSLAND		
Direct employees		1 700
Timber and Firewood cutters		73
Railway employees		250
Waterside Workers		63
Seamen		20
Merchants, Storekeepers and Manufacturers		130
Farmers		15
Coal Miners		
Howard	2	
Ipswich coke	14	
Ipswich "coal	25	
Blair Athol	90	131
		2 382
Population of Mount Morgan		
Marmor and Calliungal (MM)	12 150	
Company's employees	1 700	
Dependents	10 450	
MM & Marmor dependents		10 450
Employed in Queensland		
outside Mount Morgan	682	
Dependents (each)	5 (each)	
outside dependents on the mine		3 410
sub-total		16 242
Port Kembla and dependents		
(Mount Morgan Proportion)		1 000
APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PERSONS DEPENDENT ON THE MOUNT MORGAN MINE FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD.		17 242[89]

Table 3. Estimated number of persons dependent on the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company, 1919.

[89] MMGMC, Statement No. 1, 13 November 1919, D15/281, CC/CQU.

dependence on the mine for employment and commercial enterprise within the region and, indeed, Queensland. Some inaccuracies in the analysis suggest management's assertion that the *total* Mount Morgan population depended on the mine to be incorrect. Nonetheless, use of the data provided a bargaining point against union action in 1919, and in industrial negotiations in 1921 when the Company required the men to accept a wage reduction.[90] Chapter six includes discussion of this issue.

Fig. 11. Baree Post office and store, c. 1918. Wide horizontal cladding to interior, exposed external timbers, enclosed verandah on left with skillion roof provides shop space. Frontage to the road is terraced to the ground level of steps, right, near split slab fence. Wide metal plates above foundation posts of bush timber protect against white ants.

The original settlement known as the 'Two Mile' north of Mount Morgan was proclaimed 'Baree', where settlement developed near the Golden Spur Hotel. The old establishment had several changes of licensee in little more than twenty years, but patrons were reassured always of the high standard of the hotel 'table'.[91] Decentralised shopping at Mount Morgan began at Baree's Golden Cob Cash Store and other

[90] A.A. Boyd, A history of Mount Morgan, p. 17, D15/309.2, CC/CQU.
[91] *Critic*, 23 January 1914.

storekeepers brought trade. In turn, resident numbers warranted a school, churches, post office, (incorporated with McGladdery's Store, above), and other services as pointed out in chapter two. The character of Baree consolidated after 1909 when alteration to municipal and shire boundaries saw the suburb administered by the Calliungal shire. Doubtless, the rural oriented shire by-laws differed from those for Mount Morgan municipality; for example, in the regulations for the conduct of sporting fixtures, to be discussed in chapter nine.

Baree was also at the opposite end of town to the older, generally unseen suburbs to the south, including the large area of reserves including the cemetery, sanitary depot and town slaughteryards that extended south-east along Horse Creek. Geographically, Baree was out of sight of Mount Morgan and the mine and promoted a self-imposed image of difference, albeit existing within the economic structure of the town. On a broader note, if Mount Morgan was a microcosm of Rockhampton, so was Baree of Mount Morgan.

The rough tracks, hills and valleys of Mount Morgan encouraged a horse taxi trade. The vehicles used were four-wheeled, covered buggies. Travel at night was hazardous, with only a carriage lamp to guide a vehicle on dreadful roads in a poorly lit town. River crossings were equally dangerous for horse vehicles, particularly at night. The easiest available crossing was directly below the mine, in a shallow, river bed area outside the wall of the number five dam.

With the railway station located typically some distance from the town centre, taxis met all trains and also took fares to rail departures. Within twenty years, however, motor vehicles, their drivers wearing long 'dust coats' and driving caps joined horse taxis to provide transport for those who could pay and were not afraid of combustion engine technology. Perhaps the cost of the fare and travel in a noisy, smelly,

Fig. 12 . Dee River crossing between mine and town, c. 1900. Note position of buggies in river bed crossing below the dam wall. It is probably summer, see harnessed horses stand in the water, an action typical of some animals in north Queensland; figures in the foreground wear light clothing and wide brimmed hats of the era.

automobile taxi reflected passenger preference, and accounted for the mix of vehicles on the 'rank' along the centre of Morgan Street, the shopping centre and widest road in town. Private motor vehicles were typically few during the period, although a motor vehicle added to the public persona of the merchant with a large store and who assumed

Fig. 13. Horse and motor taxis, Morgan Street shopping centre, c. 1923.

petite bourgeoisie status. He might hold office in local government, provide financial and administrative support to the town hospital and serve on community committees. D.D. O'Connell was such a merchant. He conducted a large emporium for soft furnishings and furniture, fashion and drapery, commanding much of the flourishing tailoring trade in town for both male and female customers. Moreover, his investment in real estate and associated commercial interests elevated him to a local status the equivalent of mine senior staff.[92] Astute in business, O'Connell placed attractive advertisements in the local press for 'D.D. O'Connell Tailors', advising when a consignment of new worsted and woollen suitings was on the floor and assuring the public that a three-piece suit tailored in the workroom would be completed within three weeks.[93] The circumstance of female employees at local stores and workrooms is addressed in chapter eight, but this chapter suggests that O'Connell employed tailors, seamstresses and unskilled assistants in workrooms where wedding gowns and ensembles were designed, sewn and embroidered. His main competitor was Ferriter's Store, their succinct advertising texts appearing without charge in the columns of the *Critic*, where readers might peruse the rhetoric before becoming aware of an embedded advertisement:

> Australia for the Australians every time. Just to hand, the famous Marrickville Tweeds - manufactured by Vicars. Strong, durable, and the price is most reasonable.[94]

Employment at O'Connell's and Ferriter's was a contradiction in terms to the local maxim that a woman's place was in the home. However, Kelly's Store employed males only, a practice that throughout the period was a tradition at the family operated store. The public image of Kelly as a staunch supporter of sporting clubs and male only hotel functions suggests a gender specific employment style to enhance his local status. Mount Morgan enterprise did not have a monopoly on trade. Travelling markets

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92 *Critic*, 4 September 1908.
93 *Critic*, 2 August 1917.
94 *Critic*, 24 November 1911.

operated in Queensland by 1900 and Russell Wilkins' Red Arcade, at which 'The Shilling Table' was a major attraction, operated in Mount Morgan for two weeks only, selling for cash at lower than town prices and claiming to give the best value in the state. However, townspeople visited the Arcade for entertainment as much as a bargain and the effect on local trade was minimal.[95] More significant were the Rockhampton business competitors who visited the town and challenged local suppliers. One representative took rooms at the Calliungal Hotel to receive local orders for suits to be tailored by J.W. Jones, a Rockhampton tailor who advertised extensively in the local press during sales promotions at Mount Morgan.[96]

Fig. 14. Male employees, Kelly & Sons, 'universal providers', 1917, the store extends over two land blocks and features two wide entrances.

Large, established stores at Rockhampton tended to open branches at Mount Morgan and rural towns further west. This applied mainly to general and clothing traders, including Woods & Company, Kirby & Co., and James Stewart & Co. Ltd. Stewart was a partner in a drapery and furniture shop at Rockhampton by 1863 and

95 *MMA*, 8 June 1900.
96 *Critic*, 6 November 1903.

within twenty years traded independently in what remained for generations the most prestigious department store in the main street of town. A shareholder and director of the mine Company by 1888, Stewart was appointed board chairman from 1889 to 1893, after which he relinquished his positions but retained his shares.[97] An avid mining investor, he held shares in seventeen operations in the Rockhampton region by 1903.[98] However, as founder of James Stewart & Co. Ltd., Rockhampton, he was also the quintessential town merchant, with store branches at Blackall, Barcaldine and as far as Longreach, 800 kilometres west but connected by rail with Rockhampton. These branches traded as subsidiaries under the name of the parent organisation.

At Mount Morgan, Stewart's financial operation was The Mount Morgan Trading Company, for which he built the largest, most impressive timber store in town on land described as the 'Estate of Minnie Gordon, Mount Morgan, Portion 247'.[99] The Mount Morgan Trading Company paid rent of less than five per cent on the value of the building. Discussion in chapter one confirms that Portion 247 included the 'square mile of 647 acres of freehold' that was the mine holding of the Mount Morgan mine syndicate. The Portion was historic space already and the name 'Minnie Gordon' was significant to the site when in 1896, Stewart leased the south eastern corner from the estate. Mount Morgan history suggests that Minnie Gordon, who told the Morgans the location of the mine, became destitute and was institutionalised until her death, when the annual rent to the estate was a mere £18.

For almost 30 years the Mount Morgan Trading Company transferred substantial net profits annually to the three Rockhampton shareholders. Division of the first £500 profit in July 1896 read: James Stewart, Capital Account 'four-sixths', Robert McFarlane

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[97] MMGMC, *Annual Report*, vol. 1, nos. 3-8, 1888-1893, D15/271, CC/CQU.
[98] McDonald, *Rockhampton*, pp. 501-503.
[99] James Stewart, Private Journal 1894-1931, January 1929, Folio 239, James Stewart & Co. Ltd. Collection, M11/1677, CC/CQU.

and Charles Steele, one sixth each.[100] Within twelve months, Mount Morgan profits doubled, then for three years increased by almost 25 per cent annually until 1901. During the worst years of the great drought, profits fell by 40 per cent. The vast rains that rejuvenated the state revived business also and Stewart's at Mount Morgan saw net profit increase by 120 per cent in 1904.[101] The store reaped steady profits for transfer to Rockhampton until 1918, when high overhead costs to accommodate a large staff, and competition from five similar retailers in the town hampered profits. The first bad debts appeared in the accounts, while salaries increased to almost £2 400 for a gross profit of little more than £5 000. The profits of the Mount Morgan store slumped in 1919 yet, despite the death of James Stewart in 1923 and closure of the western branches by 1926, staff numbers and salaries at the Mount Morgan Trading Company remained unaltered in the face of bad debts of about £330. In 1927, reduced staff brought a total wages

Fig. 15. James Stewart & Co. c. 1917, includes emporium, adjoining stores for shoes, furniture and furnishings

[100] Stewart, Private Journal, January 1896, Folio 7, M11/1677, CC/CQU.
[101] Stewart, Private Journal, 24 July 1900-July 1904, Folios 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, M11/1677, CC/CQU.

reduction of 75 per cent, but this could not prevent a gross trading loss of more than £1500 and the doubling of bad debts. James Stewart & Co. Rockhampton closed the Mount Morgan Trading Company in 1928, transferring the stock on hand to Rockhampton and selling the Mount Morgan land and buildings at a loss of £450.[102]

For many at Mount Morgan, the opening of the Company co-operative store in September 1919 came too late. In 1911, a public meeting in the Mount Morgan School of Arts rejected a motion for the establishment of such an enterprise, a refusal that stemmed probably from recollections of a mine co-operative that failed years earlier. Declared reasons at the time were the lack of union support and capital, also inept organisation and a location distanced from the main business area. If reported correctly, this indicated a venture doomed as it began. A journalist of the radical *Critic* asserted that strong union support in both organisation and custom was critical for the success of a store. Furthermore, the press declared that mine employees should take the opportunity to support an enterprise that would offer goods at prices that were 25 per cent less than in town: 'Workers, bung in solid and avail yourselves of it'.[103] Despite press agitation, the matter of a store at Mount Morgan rested for eight years until management opened a co-operative store on Company land.

Staffed and administered by a committee of fifteen, the store included four Company staff members and other representatives nominated by general manager Adam Boyd. Three were general office employees, another was in the transport department, and eleven worked in other sections of the mine: Works, construction, workshop, the concentrator, sinter and powerhouse.[104] Rules for trade included bonus tickets to five per cent of account value that were paid on certain dates each month and applied only to Company employees, and on purchases by Company employees. The rights and

[102] Stewart, Private Journal, July 1923, Folio 239, 1928, Folios 146, 154, 155, 157, 284, 188, 226, 233, M11/1677, CC/CQU.
[103] *Critic*, 14 July 1911.
[104] *Change Room Comments*, no. 1, vol 1, October 1920, p. 2, M14/1566.18, CC/CQU.

privileges of the well-stocked co-operative store extended to wives and householders, with the warning to employees not to negotiate bonus tickets for friends, or friends' tickets for themselves. The cash receipt provided with goods also showed the bonus detail, thus recording any infringement of the conditions by outside purchasers.[105]

The four-weekly turnover for the store ranged from a low £955 in March 1920 to a high of £3 170 in December 1921. By August 1921, the discounts on clothing, manchester and piece goods averaged 19 per cent, while on new stocks of general lines discounts were between ten and fifteen per cent. Prices to Company employees for work clothing were at least 20 per cent lower than local store prices, whilst special

Fig. 16. Company Co-operative Store, 1919; image suggests at least eight staff.

purchases provided 'job lots' for sale at even greater discounts.[106] Although the store at Mount Morgan opened during a period of escalating industrial turmoil and economic

[105] *Change Room Comments*, no. 6, vol 1, January 1921, p. 2, M15/1556.18, CC/CQU.
[106] MMGMC, Employees' Co-operative Store, Price reduction statement no. 12, 12 August 1921, D15/281, CC/CQU; Employees' Co-operative Store, Creditors' Ledger 1919-1927, D15/289, CC/CQU.

decline for Company and town, extant records do not reveal whether the store extended credit at any time. In comparison, 1921 sales at the Throckley District Co-operative Society Store during the colliery strike in Durham fell by one-third, while average credit escalated by 400 per cent. Extended credit was available from the Throckley co-operative, and whilst members could settle debts by not claiming dividends, the privilege included a warning against incurring large debts. For many during strike periods in Throckley, social mores of integrity and 'respectability' ensured the payment of debts, although many more left their debts unpaid.[107] At Mount Morgan the co-operative was shortlived, staff clearing stock and closing the doors by 1927 when the Company went into voluntary liquidation.[108]

Fraud was endemic in much trade practice. Most residents perceived traders as conservatives interested in profit at any risk and uncaring of fraud against the worker. As a result, honest traders at Mount Morgan suffered as much public suspicion as those guilty of false practice. Despite agitation from union organisers and the press for fair dealing, the threat to the integrity of town enterprise persisted and any consumer might be the victim of fraud. The cost of living was out of proportion to wages for many. Moreover, the treadmill of poverty did not offer escape for the poorly paid worker whose domestic budget demonstrated lack of thrift or non-payment of debt, with the resultant refusal of service and credit. If, from sheer necessity, lack of funds brought a family to destitution, thereafter their credit rating remained non-existent, even if their financial situation recovered. At the same time, families had no redress from the unscrupulous merchant.

Financial liquidation occurred for any number of reasons, including lack of operating capital and trading expertise. Insolvency at Mount Morgan was a common

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[107] Bill Williamson, *Class, community and culture: a biographical study of social change in mining*, London, 1982, pp. 185-187.
[108] MMGMC, Employees' Co-operative Store, Creditors' Ledger, D15/289, CC/CQU.

dilemma that emphasised also the universal threat of impermanence in the mining industry. Failure was not exclusive to trade in any one commodity. Groups and companies, suppliers, miners and labourers, traders, contractors and self-employed moved on when reefs ran out, water reserves dwindled and the market value of mined ore fluctuated. Insolvencies at Mount Morgan in the quarter century 1896 to 1920 totalled almost 230, with an annual high of 25 in 1909 and a low of one in 1919. Numbers averaged fourteen annually from 1896 to 1911 and less than five from 1912 to 1920.[109] As liquidation encompassed a spectrum of enterprise and labour from tobacconists to timber getters, carpenters to commission agents, bakers to brick makers and log haulers to labourers, the trauma of insolvency and destitution struck at any person without resources. For example, insolvent James Cunningham suicided in 1899, three years after applying for *in forma pauperis* on 4 March 1896. He was the brother of successful baker and businessman, John Cunningham.[110]

Insolvencies, July-October 1899	
William Haughton,	tobacconist
Geo. Keillar Aitken,	commission agent
Gore	woodcutter
Mitchell	log hauler
Dan Morgan, Nine Mile,	timbergetter
J.T. Crompton	carpenter
A.J. Brown	brickmaker
H.A. Williams	woodcarter[111]

Table 4. Mount Morgan Insolvencies, 1899.

Formation of the Mount Morgan Traders' Association offered mutual protection against defaulting debtors. Yet, when the Official Trustee for Insolvency, J.R. Gair visited Mount Morgan in 1910 to investigate ten of the sixteen insolvent estates in the town – compared to six in Rockhampton – the branch executive or association members were

[109] MMGMC, List of Mount Morgan insolvencies, 1896-1920, D15/281, CC/CQU.
[110] CPSMM, Deposition book, 6 April 1899, CPS 7B/P5, QSA.
[111] Supreme Court, Central District, Liquidation Register 1896-1927, A18937, QSA.

less than helpful.[112] Consequently, he was unable to settle insolvents' affairs to the benefit of creditors. Causes of insolvency were not exclusively attributable to dealings with town or mine, but suggested lack of capital, or a want of thrift and business acumen. Nevertheless, ten years later, local downturn was influenced by mine production, ore prices, rising costs and industrial conflict that brought the insidious, gradual loss of jobs and ultimate mine closure.[113] The town reached its nadir when less than half of a peak population of twelve thousand remained, many trapped hopelessly in the cumulative effect of loss of the town's largest employer and escalating economic depression. Council 'found work' for fifty men in January 1926 but could do no more. Attendance at a regular local government meeting was abandoned for want of a quorum, the *Critic* declaring pithily that most aldermen 'had gone bush', their whereabouts unknown. Optimistic verse in the press offered only momentary relief from despair:

> This life is elusive
> And chaps get abusive
> When troubles come over again;
> There is always some sorrow
> Prepared for tomorrow,
> Till hope seems to wither and wane.
>
> Both in joy and disaster
> No man is his master,
> And nothing is certain in life;
> There are bills from the bakers
> And candle-stick makers,
> And rows by the score with your wife.
>
> Life is very uncertain-
> We ring down our curtain
> With feelings more puzzled than plain-
> It's a joy to remember
> In June or December,
> The streets will be up once again![114]

[112] J.S. Gair, 'Report of the official trustee of insolvency at Rockhampton: Queensland Statistics 1910', *QV&P*, 1911, pp. 545, 546,
[113] *Brisbane Telegraph*, 30 May 1927.
[114] *Critic*, 19 November 1927.

Government inspectors under the *Pure Foods Act* brought prosecutions against local storekeepers for unhygienic trading practice. This and other issues pertaining to law and order for trade and enterprise during the era of the Company are addressed in chapter four. However, in light of discussion in this chapter, prosecutions relating to trade in perishables as the town declined in the 1920s suggest the consequence of minimal staff and the extension of shelf time for produce. In the town that two decades earlier was a thriving urban place, the local facade changed drastically. Looting was not prevalent when stores closed down, but in the absence of a water supply or fire brigade, few buildings were saved when dwellings and other structures were destroyed in unexplained fires. Enmeshed always in a short-term materialism that relied on weekly wages for its buoyancy, Mount Morgan moved by necessity to an overwhelming dependence on government sustenance. While remaining traders displayed a desperate optimism that the complete closure of the mine would be brief, the *Critic* reported bleakly that:

> It is going to be a poor Christmas compared to past years for a lot of people on the Mount. Unemployment is still rife and every day adds further to the ranks. Most of the sustenance allowance has expired, and the prospect of getting work in the immediate future is very remote.[115]

Ironically, a week later the same press claimed that the town had rallied and over Christmas 1927, at least:

> The town will not be so dead after all...each incoming train during the week has been well filled with men who have been working in different parts of the state returning to their families…With those here who are still working, the payout of Christmas Cheer…and [with] the extra ration dole, a good bit of cash should be in play.[116]

[115] *Critic*, 3 December 1927.
[116] *Critic*, 10 December 1927.