

Hotels sprang up at The Springs

The Springs 1863 - c.1870's

Originally a small settlement of various houses, it wasn't until 1863 that the town became an important stop for travellers from Donnelly's Creek and the Jordan Goldfields. Fertile soils and natural springs provided much needed water for their horses.

At its peak there were up to three hotels. The Springs Hotel operated by Morgan Davis; The Junction Hotel operated by William Meagher; and J.M. Mackenzie's Store (which also operated as a Hotel).

Horse racing, football, cricket, boxing, dances and private musical entertainments were frequently held and free of charge at The Springs.

One Christmas Day in the 1860's at The Springs, they boasted foot races, boxing, tossing the caber, and tug-of-war, followed by a bull fight and late night ball. The event opened spectacularly, with the houses and streets covered in coloured ribbons and paper as well as Chinese lanterns during the night activities. The bull fight however which had been the main attraction, turned out to be a hoax, with only one bull presented with bells and ribbons attached to its horns and tail. Understandably a brawl ensued, however it did not prevent a successful festival on the whole.

The Springs also had a cemetery according to an 1863 map. However, it is unlikely there were any burials in it. All traces of the cemetery are now destroyed by previous logging. However, there were three burials according to death certificates at or near Mrs Meagher's Hotel Site. Johnson Reevey (42yrs) Died 26th August, 1864. Baby Ryan, unnamed infant (1 day) Died 13th January, 1865 and Thomas Sanford (2 weeks) Died July 1875.

When the mining interests declined Meagher and Morgan used their gardens to grow vegetables, and the butchery / slaughter house to provide food for the Donnelly's Creek community. In the late 1870's the principal establishment that remained was the homestead, and the occasional accommodation house of the Meagher family which continued to operate into the early 1900's. Mrs Meagher and family remained sole occupants for about 20 years, continuing her husband's butchery business and providing food and bread to weary travellers.

Richard Mackay who was a gold buyer, businessman and adventurer of the mountain goldfields in the 1860's to 1916 had this to say about the Springs Hotel upon visiting it in the 1860's.

"It was a long, low-walled building of round logs and slabs placed horizontally, roofed with stringy bark and lighted openings cut into the walls calico taking the place of glass. An enormous chimney wide enough to permit several people to sit within its ample walls, and within which at all hours of the day and night burned enormous logs, that under an immense crane gave heat. Numerous pots, kettles and other utensils that seemed to be everlasting boiling or roasting or baking. The meals were as prodigiously ample as the chimney, and if anyone must hunger it was his own fault, and no traveller in want was ever turned away empty because of inability to pay"



The Springs 1900.



A hut at The Springs c. 1900

Photos courtesy of "Donnelly's Creek: From Rush to Ruin of a Gippsland Mountain Goldfield"
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