

# Comet Tales & Walking Trails

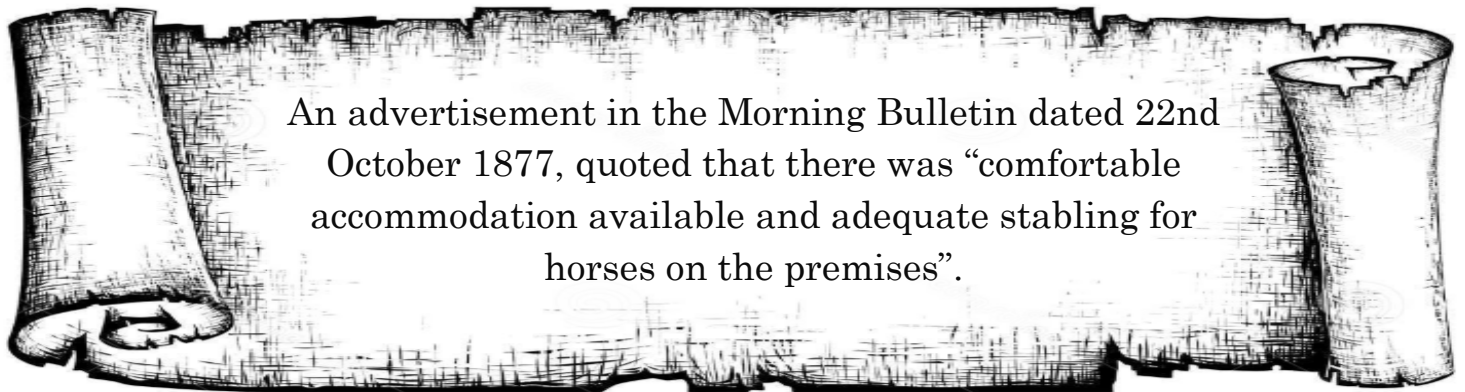


## **KITCHENER'S COMET HOTEL**

### ***SITE 10***

#### **A NEW HOTEL**

This Comet Hotel was built by William Kitchener in 1877. It was located on Ballard Street in the new town of Cometville. The hotel was situated opposite to the railway station and was almost the centre of the town's bustling main street. It was a very roomy building with a detached kitchen, as was the practice in those days, in case of fire.

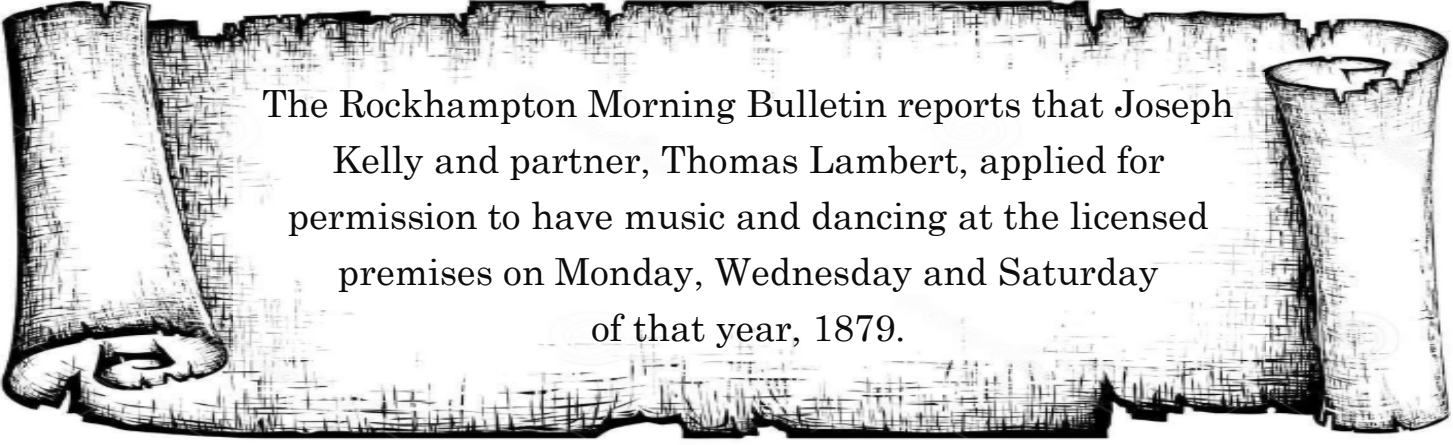


An advertisement in the Morning Bulletin dated 22nd October 1877, quoted that there was "comfortable accommodation available and adequate stabling for horses on the premises".

#### **AN ENTERPRISING MAN**

Mr Kitchener also had a store in the hotel and a butcher shop next door. It would appear at this time, that many of the hotels had their own slaughtering licenses. Which leaves me to wonder about the hygiene in the town.

William Kemp applied for a liquor license on the 23rd August 1878 for the Comet Hotel. Apparently, Mr Kitchener did not manage the liquor sales of the hotel. Perhaps he was busy with his store and butcher shop. This license was later transferred to Joseph Kelly on the 13th May 1879.



The Rockhampton Morning Bulletin reports that Joseph Kelly and partner, Thomas Lambert, applied for permission to have music and dancing at the licensed premises on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday of that year, 1879.

The following year on 7th September 1880, William Kitchener applied for a liquor license and operated the hotel until 1903.









## THE KITCHENER FAMILY

William Kitchener's wife Elisha, nee Wilkinson was born in Grafton, NSW in 1861 and died at 451 Campbell Street, Rockhampton on the 23rd of September 1932.

There were nine children in the Kitchener family.

Lily, born on the 20th October 1878. It is not known when she died.

Mary Ellen, born 2nd March 1880 and died 7th August 1934.

Helen, born 5th August 1882. She lived just one month and died on the 4th September 1882. Helen is buried in the Comet cemetery.

Thomas William, was born on the 14th September 1884 and died 15th April 1955.

Harriet Elizabeth, born 14th January 1885. She died on the 6th of April that year, aged three months. Harriet was laid to rest in the Comet cemetery.

Alfred arrived on the 24th February 1886 and died on the 19th July 1960.

Maud Caroline May was born in 1887. The date of her death is not known.

Edwin, born 14th July 1890. He passed away on the 14th of November 1958.

Samuel George, (known as young George,) was born in 1892 and died on 21st September 1981.



## **LOVE OF MUSIC**

Des Dunn, historian of Mackay, tells of young George's love of music and of playing his accordion at functions in the family hotel. I heard him play the musical saw (a hand saw used as a musical instrument, where the sound is usually created by drawing a violin bow across the back edge of the saw) at the 1978 Comet School Centenary Celebrations, accompanied on piano by his daughter. It was a wonderful experience. I doubt that there would be too many people playing a musical saw these days.

## **THE DISCOVERY OF GEMS**

The Gemfields area had seen an increase in population with the finding of sapphires in 1876. The population further increased with the failure of the Copperfield mining field to the north near Clermont in 1891. Unemployed copper miners travelled to the area in search of the precious stones.

## **THE FAMILY MOVE TO SAPPHIRE TOWN**

The Kitchener family decided to move to Newsom's Camp (later Sapphire Town) on Retreat Creek in the Gemfields fossicking area, as Comet had little to offer at this time.

Comet had dwindled to a hotel, store, school, railway station and half a dozen houses. The railway workers were camped on the railway reserve behind the railway station.

As you recall, the Comet Hotel was a very large building with a detached kitchen. The main part of the hotel was pulled down and moved to Sapphire Town where it was rebuilt.

The family lived in the hotel kitchen at Comet while the re-construction of the building took place. The kitchen later followed the family to their new home. The Kitchener family hotel traded in Sapphire for many years.

Mary Ellen married James Campbell, a sapphire miner on the 17th February 1909 in Sapphire Town. After the marriage the couple settled down and managed the hotel upon Mr Kitchener's retirement.

Mary died on the 7th August 1931 and is buried in the Sapphire Cemetery. After Mary's death, James sold the building to the Richardson family for £126.0.0 (\$252.00). The hotel ceased trading and closed in 1937.

The dismantled building was used to construct three houses. One was the residence of Edward and May Richardson (later Pacey's) in Anakie. A dinner bell used at the hotel went with this building to its new home. Another part of the hotel was moved to Robert Street in Emerald and the last part of the hotel was transported to Clermont.

The removal of this building from Comet in 1903 left the town without a hotel.

*Compiled by Rosemary McLeod, 2018.*

### Acknowledgments:

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### Photos:

*National Library of Australia; State Library of Queensland; Rosemary McLeod collection; Trevor Kemp collection.*