

# Comet Tales & Walking Trails



Central Highlands  
Regional Council



## COMET STATE SCHOOL

### SITE 3

### SCHOOLING IN THE EARLY DAYS

The Lorneville State School, opened  
23rd. October 1877.

Roll of Head Teachers.

- 1 Samuel Clark. 23/10/77 To 19/9/79
- 2 Alexander Blyth 1-1-79 " 30/9/79
- 3 John Boland (alt) 1-10-79 = 30/9/81
- 5 William H.A Jeffries 20/8/83 = 31/12/84
- 4 John Hassel 1-10-81 = 2-9-83
- 6 Wm. Henry Smith 10-1-85 = 25-4-89
- 7 John Mills 6-5-89 = 25-4-91
- 8 Phill. Hen Robinson 26-5-91 = 31-12-96
- 9 Louis Francis 1-1-97 = 6-2-98
- 10 George Henry Diamond 28-2-98 = 31-12-00
- 11 Dennis Sheahan 1-1-01 = 13-3-02
- 12 Herbert Geo Hadbrook 7-4-02 = 31-3-05
- 13 Glen Bleadley 1-4-05 = 30-6-10
- Patrick Kehoe 1-7-10 = 28-2-11
- Albert Boucher 27-3-11 = 30-3-11
- James Shale 1-5-14 = 15-5-14
- Henry Langford 18-9-18 = 2-9-18
- dy. Fanny Hild 1-10-21 = 1-10-21
- Les Kemp 25-1-26 = 25-1-26
- Mr. Gordon 1-1-30 = 1-1-30

Schooling for children in the very early days would have been difficult to say the least. Only one teacher with many children of all ages to educate. What a task that would have been!

*An extract from T W Kemp's book, Comet State School Centenary 1877/78 -1977/78 reads:*

“The necessity for a school for the education of the 78 children in the town was considered when a meeting of gentlemen was convened on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1877. The State Moveable School which had been at Dingo along with the teacher, Mr. Samuel Clark was transferred to Cometville by the Board of Education. The tent school was opened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1877”. The tent school was said to be “28ft by 16ft with one side to contain a curtain for the teacher’s accommodation.” This moveable school was said to be constructed by the Railway Engineer, Robert Ballard.

A sub-committee of the Cometville Progress Association was given the task of establishing a more suitable building for the school children. This was to be built of local timber, both hardwood and pine with a bark roof. The building was placed in the area bounded by Shakespeare, Cable and King Streets (King Street has since been closed) and was in use within six months. The late Alan McLeod told me that this area in town was also called The Orchard.

The school was also known as Comet River State School and Cometville State School. A letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> May 1912 from F C Dodds, Secretary of the school committee, to the Department of Public Instruction requested the name of the school be changed from Cometville to Comet State School.

APPLICATION\* FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL.

3943  
28.9.17

Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 1877

To the Honorable the Secretary for Public Instruction, Brisbane.

SIR,

Competent Resident  
E. H. August

(\*) To be modified in case of Provisional Schools.

(1) At a public meeting held on the 1877, at The Cornet, of which fourteen days' notice was duly given in accordance with Clause 7 of the Regulations, the following gentlemen, namely,

W. H. Power  
W. Carrington  
W. Winton

(?) Omit "Building" in case of Provisional Schools.  
(\*) "State" or "Provisional."

were elected members of a (?) Building Committee for promoting the establishment of a (?) State School at The Cornet

2. The average attendance of children, between the ages of five and fourteen years, likely to be obtained at the proposed school, is Between 100 and 170 yearly.

3. The amount of the local subscriptions already promised is £         .  
The total amount expected to be collected is £         .

(\*) Insert acreage and description.

4. The proposed site consists of (\*) a space at the back of the main street to be decided by the Committee.

(\*) Describe position exactly, giving No. of portion or allotment if possible.

and is situated (\*) as above no allotments being surveyed

(\*) Give names of trees.

5. The timber available in the district consists of (\*) Iron Bark, Red Wood, Brigalow, Pine, & Rose.

(\*) Split or sawn hardwood or pine, or both, as the case may be.

and most of the buildings are built of (\*) Split Pine & Sawn pine

6. The price of sawn timber delivered on the ground is for hardwood 35 s. - d., and for pine 30 s. / d. per 100 superficial feet.

The average cost of substantial two-rail fencing is 7 s. 6 d. per rod.

(\*) Describe proposed means of securing water.

7. A supply of water can be obtained by (\*) Certains at present though it has been proposed by several residents to erect a pump for the benefit of the Community. Abundant supply.

(\*) Insert names of places and distance from proposed site.

8. There are within ten miles of the proposed site          state and          provisional schools, of which the nearest is at The Dam, distant ten (10) miles from the proposed site, and the others are at (\*) Dingo about fifty miles (50) from the proposed site.

9. Annexed is a list of the children likely to attend the proposed new school, and of their parents, which we certify to be correct.

We have the honor to request that the Governor in Council may be pleased to authorise the establishment of a (\*) State School as proposed.

(\*) "State" or "Provisional."

William Winton  
William Carrington  
W. H. Power

Members of the Committee.

\* This application should be accompanied by a letter giving full particulars.  
NOTE.—In the case of Provisional Schools, paragraphs 5 and 6 need not be filled up.



## COMETVILLE COURTHOUSE

With the building and opening of a courthouse in the established town of Emerald in July 1881, the Cometville courthouse became vacant. It was renovated by Mr Lambert for £226.0.0 (\$452.00) and made suitable to use as a school. The children and their teacher moved into the old courthouse building in October of that year.



COMETVILLE COURTHOUSE



COMET STATE SCHOOL Mr. Thiele HT 1917

## TEACHERS ACCOMMODATION

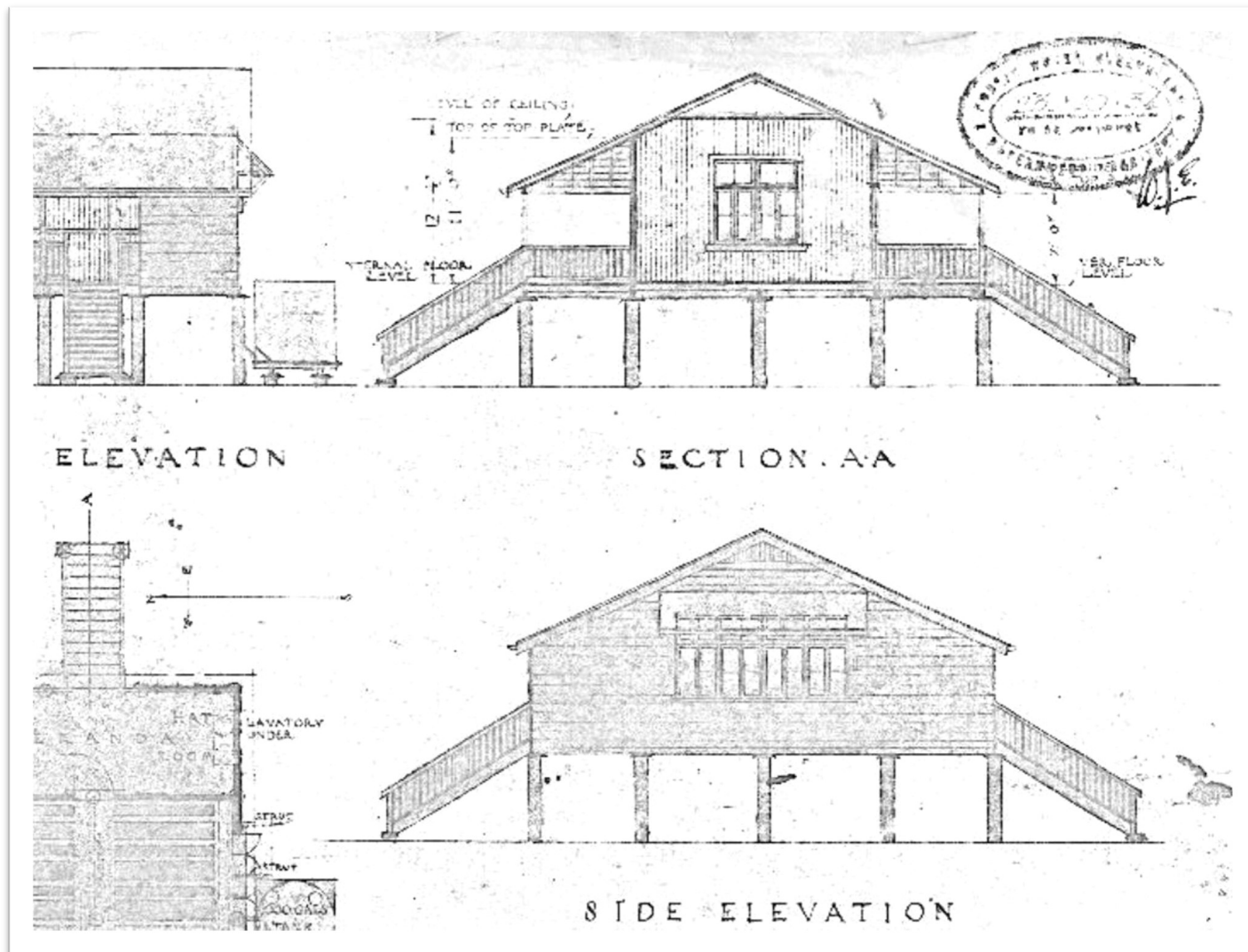
Accommodation for teachers had always been a problem. With the transfer of the police in 1890 to Emerald, the police building adjacent to the courthouse/school was used as a teacher residence. A paragraph borrowed from “From Humble Beginnings the first 100 years of Comet State School 1877 – 1977” in which Mrs Emma White nee Crocker, who attended Comet School between 1904 and 1910, remembers her teacher living in the old police station.

In 1966 accommodation was built for single teachers. Twenty years later, in 1985, a house to accommodate a teacher with a family was constructed to encouraging teachers to stay on. Up until this time it was hard to keep single teachers who, in most cases, came from the city to live in the one room cottage available to them.



COMET STATE SCHOOL year unknown

## THE NEW SCHOOL BUILDING

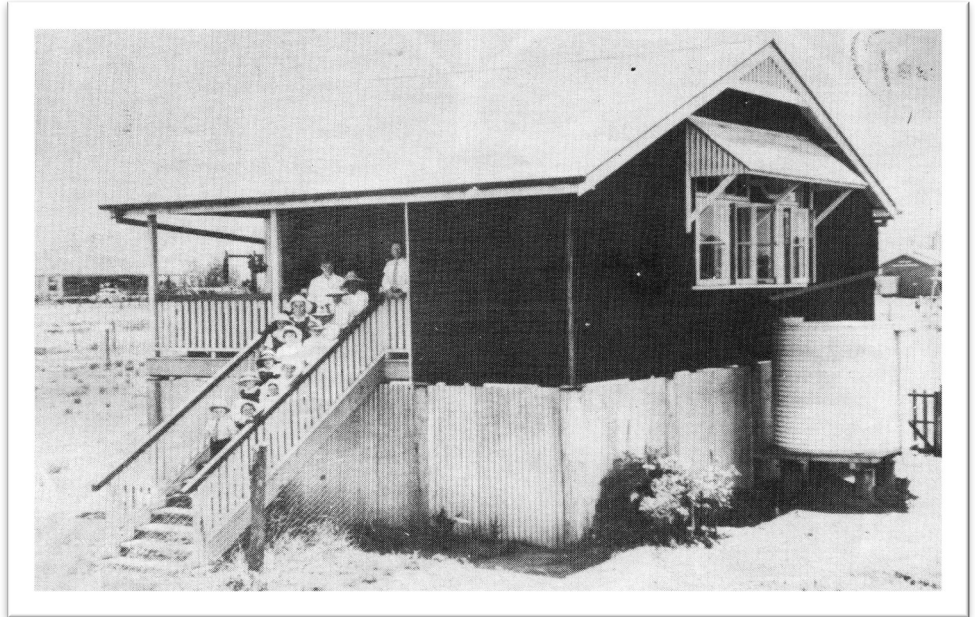


PLANS FOR THE NEW SCHOOL BUILDING 23RD OCTOBER 1934

The old courthouse/school building needed repair. A letter from the Department of Public Works, dated 4th October 1934, states that the cost to repair the building was £107.0.0 (\$214.00). The cost to remove the building was £40.0.0 (\$80.00). The cost of repair was more than the building's worth so in 1936 a new school building was constructed alongside the old school/courthouse by the Jell brothers (Alf, George and Frank) of South Brisbane at a cost of £425.0.0 (\$850.00).



Until the advent of septic systems, there were outhouses down by the ant bed tennis court. Past Principal Peter Hulthen recalls that the toilets were serviced by the school teacher for \$1.00 a pan. A new hygienic toilet block was opened in 1973. He said that the Public Works Department took about eight months to construct the building.



THE CHILDREN MOVED INTO THIS BUILDING JULY 1936

## **THE ANT BED TENNIS COURT**

The ant bed tennis court was maintained by the parents of the children attending school. Meat ant mounds would be collected from the paddocks to break up, water and crush with a heavy hand operated cement roller, to create a hard surface on the tennis court. The court now has a smooth all-weather surface and night lighting; a vast improvement on the ant bed.



COMET STATE SCHOOL 1936

## FLIES AND BITING INSECTS

There were no fly screens in the building to keep out flies and biting insects. When the Comet River was flooding, sandflies invaded the town. A tin with holes punched in the sides and a wire handle was called a smoke billy. Loaded with smouldering cow manure, it created smoke to keep the dreaded insects at bay. Peter Hulthen recalls burning cow manure in a smoke billy in the classroom to ward off the sandflies.

A smoke fire was kept burning in the playground for the children, allowing them to play during the lunch breaks. There was no Aerogard at that time. Instead, a mixture of olive oil and Dettol was used on bare skin. It worked, but was messy. The oil soaked into clothing.

I remember my son going to school carrying a smoke belly... but it was a different matter coming home, no smoke to protect him then. His hair was black with sandflies by the time he arrived home.

## RIDING TO SCHOOL

At the rear of the school grounds, behind the tennis court, there was a paddock in which children who rode to school each day could graze their horses.



COMET STATE SCHOOL 1885





Comet State School 1892



Comet State School 1924





COMET STATE SCHOOL 1935



COMET STATE SCHOOL 1946

## **THE DEMOUNTABLE SCHOOL BUILDING**

In 1977, a demountable building was bought and placed at the rear of the existing building. It was a long building with two classrooms and a verandah on the southern side. Ventilation and light were provided by banks of louvres on the northern and southern walls.

This new building helped to cater for the growing population of school children whose families had moved to work on the construction of the high-level main road bridge over the Comet River. They resided in the Main Roads camp on the Railway Reserve near the showgrounds. The demountable building remained in use until 1995.



COMET STATE SCHOOL 1961 Principal: Peter

## **THE NEW SCHOOL**

In October 1996, a hundred and twenty years since Samuel Clark and the tent school arrived in Cometville, a new school was opened. Fundraising by the Parents and Citizens allowed for the installation of air-conditioning. Since then, another building has been added for the younger grades. All buildings are now airconditioned.

The old 1936 building is still in use today by the school staff and children.

Compiled by Rosemary McLeod. 2017

### **Acknowledgements**

Trevor Kemp "Comet State School Centenary 1877/8 – 1977/8"

Elena Keating B. Ed., Dip. T. "From Humble Beginnings the first 120 years of Comet State School 1877 – 1997"

Ernest Slatter

Margaret McLeod

Audrey Bywater

*Rosemary McLeod* Alan McLeod

### **Photos:**

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



## Rules for Teachers 1879

1. Teachers each will fill lamps and clean chimneys before beginning work.
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the days session.
3. Make your pens carefully; you may whittle nibs to the individual taste of the children.
4. Men teachers may take one evening a week for courting purposes or two evenings to attend church regularly.
5. After ten hours in school, you may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.
6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
7. Every teacher should lay aside, from each pay, a goodly sum for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.
8. Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool halls or gets shaved in a barber's shop, will give good reason to suspect his worthy intentions, integrity and honesty.

## Rules for Women Teachers 1915

1. You will not marry during the term of contract.
2. You are not to keep the company of men.
3. You must be home between the hours of 8 pm and 6 am unless attending a school function.
4. You will not loiter downtown in ice cream parlours.
5. You may not travel beyond the city limits without the permission of the chairman of the board.
6. You may not ride in a carriage or automobile with any man unless he is your father or brother.
7. You may not smoke cigarettes.
8. You may not dress in bright colours.
9. Under no circumstances may you dye your hair.
10. You must wear at least two petticoats and your dresses must not be any shorter than two inches above the ankle.
11. To keep the school room clean, you must sweep the floor at least once daily, scrub the floor with hot soapy water at least once a week, clean the blackboard once a day and start the fire at 7 am so that the room is warm when the children arrive.

BY ORDER