

Comet Tales & Walking Trails



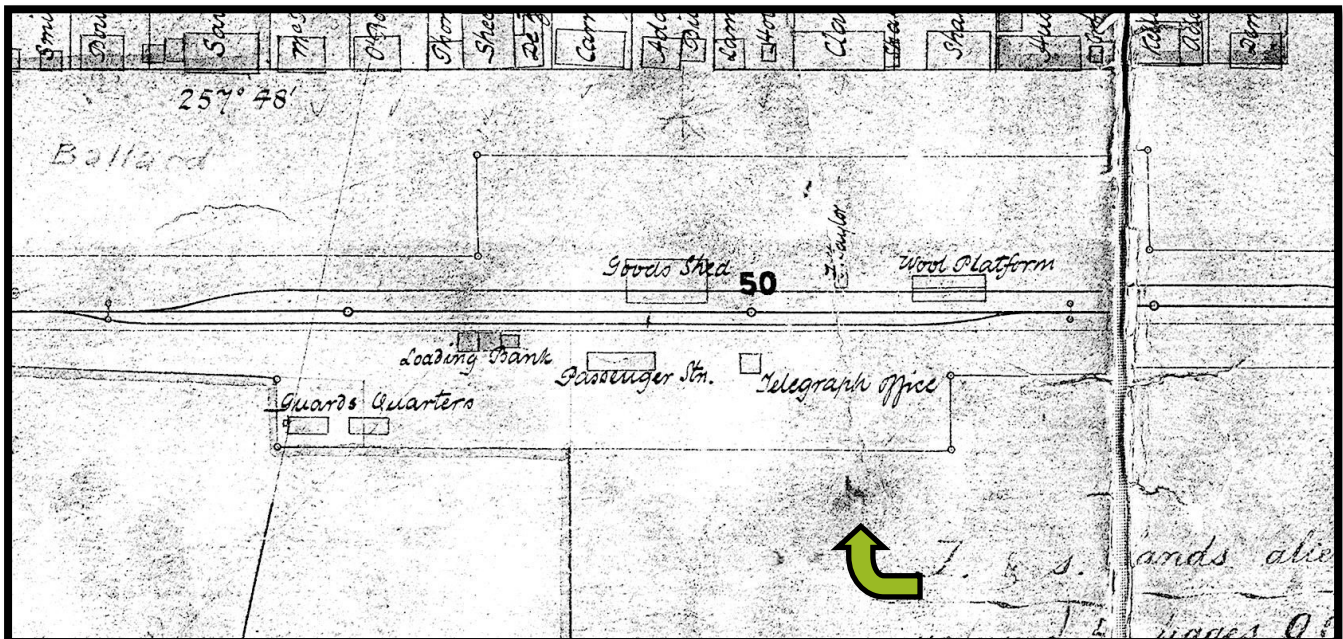
COMET POST OFFICE

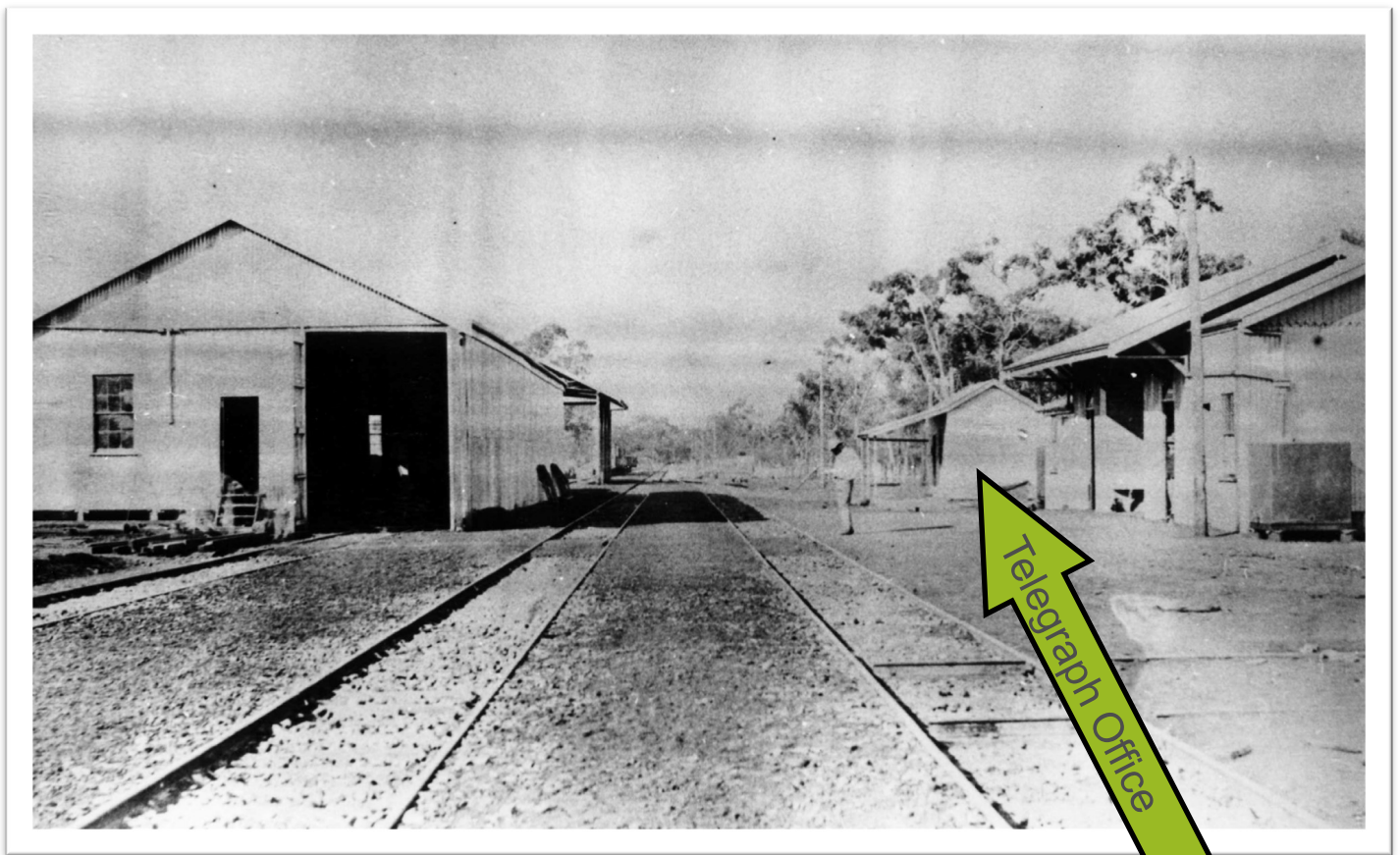
SITE 9

FIRST POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICE

Let's take a look back over the years to the first post and telegraph office in the town, which arrived with the advancing railway. Mr M J Sheehan was the first Postmaster in Cometville. His salary was £12.0.0 (\$24.00) a year. The office opened on 5th September 1877 and was situated in the railway yard to the east of the railway station. Fortunately, it is marked on the 1878 Comet survey map, so we are sure where it was located. Telegrams were being sent and received by December that year.

A money order office opened in the next year due to a request from the public and the Cometville Progress Association.





COMET RAILWAY STATION AND GOODS SHED

GREAT NORTHERN RAIL LINE (Central Railway)

The rail line to the west officially reached Comet on 1st March 1878, however there were many businesses, workers and their families living in the town by the end of the previous year.

COBB & CO DELIVER THE MAIL

Mail services prior to 28th April 1878 came by mail coach which ran from Blackwater to Copperfield twice a week. Later that year the mail contractor included Comet, travelling a total distance of 113 miles (182km). It was known as Mail Service 61. On May 26, 1879 when the railway line had reached Emerald, Mail Service 61 changed again. The service travelling from Emerald to Copperfield.

Mail service 108 ran twice weekly Comet to Springsure, travelling a distance of 55 miles (88.5km). Cobb and Co had the contract with Charlie Hewson as coach driver.

Mail service 108 was cancelled when the rail line to Springsure from Emerald was opened on 15th August 1887 with mail services increased to three times a week to Springsure.

POST OFFICE OFFICIALS

Post Officials in Charge of Comet Office 1878-1891.

Cheery, M	January 1, 1878	12 pounds per annum
Paris, J A	May 1. 1878	25
Cashel, C N	June 5, 1879	20
(Mr Cashel had a Telegraph Operator at the office as well).		
Morris, F L	April 19, 1880	20
Hutton, B	July 30, 1881	20
Eves, G	December 5, 1881	20
Macalister, R	February 9, 1882	20
Mulligan T J	April 21, 1882	20
Tillidge, C H (Relieving)	June, 1884	20
Mulligan, T J	June 11, 1884	20
Best, W H	June 1, 1885	20
Herbert, C	February 22, 1886	20
Armitage, M W	April 14, 1886	20
Hogan, M	May 11, 1886	25
Conyers, H B	December 18, 1888	25
Hopkins, W	March 13, 1891	25
Wharam, F T	April 10, 1891	25

Mr Noble oversaw the Railway Station for a brief Period from March 22, 1891.

We do not have a date for the transfer of the post office into the railway station.

The receipt and dispatch of parcels commenced on 14th January 1892.

Mr P Bridson took control of the Railway Station and Post Office from Mr T O'Brien on 15th January 1894.

The population of Cometville during the 1891 Census was listed as 80 persons.

REMOVAL OF POST OFFICE REQUESTED

In 1920, the Comet Progress Association requested the removal of the post office from the railway station, however the request was not granted owing to the shortage of alternative accommodation in the town.

Trunk line calls could be made at the railway station in the latter part of 1922 when a railway official attended the station. The hours to make calls were 9am to 1pm and 4pm to 6pm.

TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS

In 1929 the office had two telephone subscribers: Mr H F C Brecht, "St. Aubin's" and J W E Crow of "Duckponds."

I noted that by 1937 Mr Brecht's name had changed to Brett and there were four telephone subscribers. More were added as the years went on.

Telephone subscribers listed in 1937 were:

Miss L Brett	1H
Mr H F L Brett, St. Aubin's	1S
Mr C H Raine, Olive Vale	2
Mr Carrington, Duck Ponds	1I

In March 1946, the directory lists Jeppesen and Son, Graziers, of Olive Vale, Telephone 2 and R S Beck of Ensham, Telephone 1D as new subscribers on the party lines.



PARTY TELEGRAPH LINES

A party line was a single telephone aerial wire line which all subscribers on that line had access to at any time. All could be speaking to each other on the line at any given time. Supposing if a subscriber wished to ring Mr Brett at St. Aubin's, who's call sign was 1S then the handle on the telephone would be wound with three short rings (Morse code for S) to contact that house. I imagine in years past there would be some who's privacy would have been compromised.

If the telephone line was broken at any time, then it was the responsibility of the subscribers to reconnect the wire. In some cases, these lines ran for many kilometres. A party line kept a family in contact with others and was imperative in case of serious injury or illness. Party lines were replaced in the 1970s by radio towers. I am led to believe these were not as efficient as there was a lot of interference with television broadcast.

In 1957 there were nine telephone subscribers in Comet.

IMPROVED POST AND TELEPHONE HOURS

Extended hours of attendance at the post office/railway station in which to make calls were approved On April 13, 1959.

Monday	9am – 12 noon	2pm - 5pm.	
Tuesday	9am – 12 noon	2pm - 6pm	7pm - 8pm.
Wednesday	9am - 12 noon	2pm - 6pm.	
Thursday	9am - 12 noon	2pm - 6 pm	7pm - 8pm.
Friday	9am - 12 noon	2pm - 6pm	7pm - 8pm
Saturday	9am - 12.30pm		

Office hours were restricted and inconvenient.

APPROVAL FOR A NEW POST OFFICE

Over the years the town's residents had requested the removal of the post office from the railway station. Approval was finally given in 1960 after representations to the premier. The post office remained in the stationmaster's office until 1961.

Mr Jack Finch was the Postmaster and Stationmaster at the time of the closure of the office.

A NEW POST OFFICE

With the opening of the new post office building next to the Comet Hotel on 1st March 1961, residents had more convenient hours in which to do business.

The new telephone exchange hours were:

Monday – Friday 9am – 1pm 2pm -3pm

Saturday 9am – 1pm

Sunday & Holidays 9am – 10am

Easter Saturday 9am – 11am

At this time there were fifteen subscribers connected to the Exchange.

The post office became a full time non-official office on 1st July 1974.

INCREASED EXCHANGE HOURS FOR RESIDENTS

In 1977, Exchange Hours were increased from 8am - 1pm; 2pm – 10pm. Six telephone subscribers and the public telephone were connected to the Emerald Exchange after these hours under a night switching arrangement.

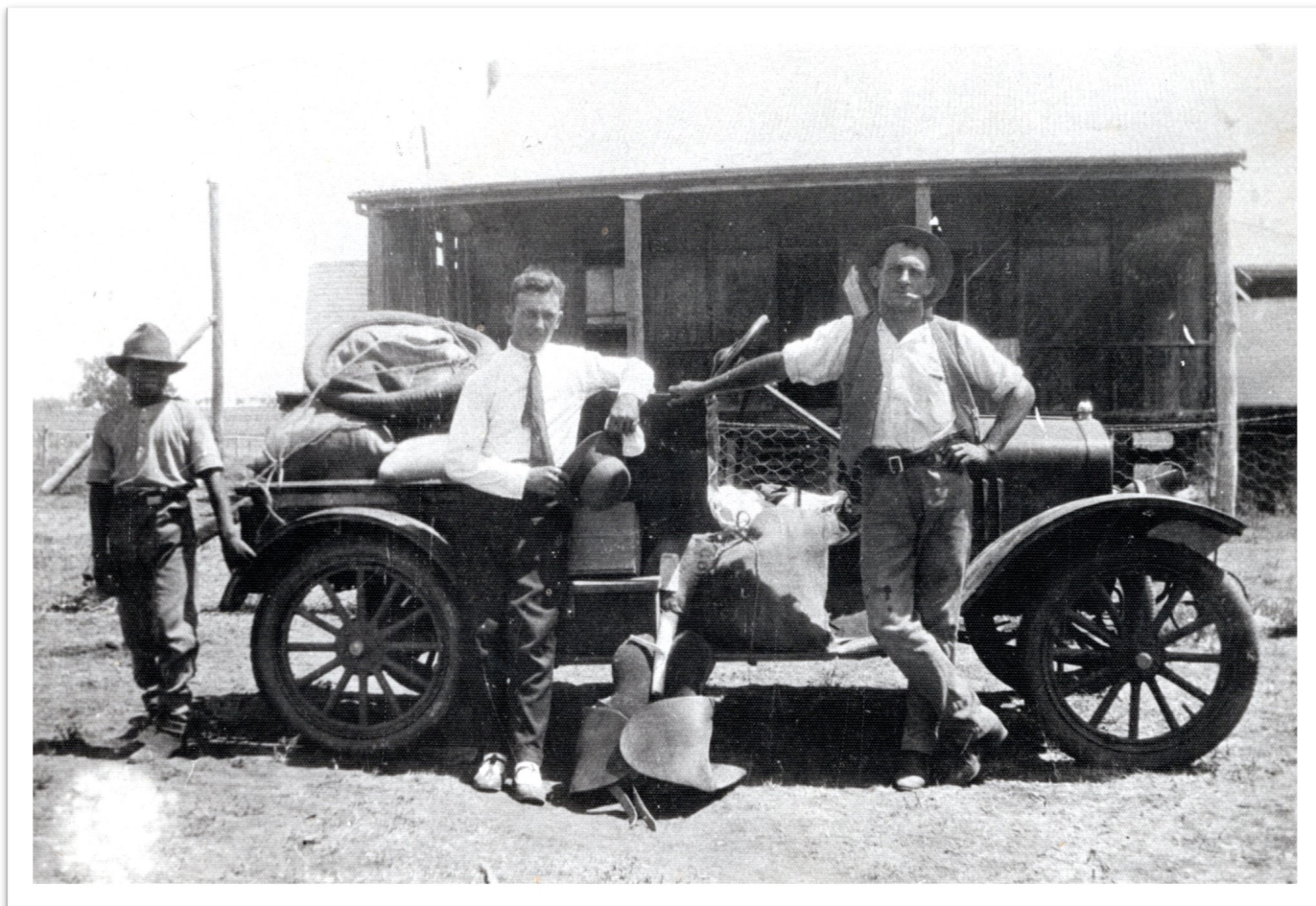
MAIL SERVICES

Mail at this time were received at 9am and despatched at 5pm on weekdays and 11am Saturday by train. A direct mail bag was made up for Emerald and Rockhampton by the Postmistress.

People in town either had a post box allotted to them or collected their mail from the post mistress. Mail service 141 to the out-lying properties was contracted by private carrier.

MAIL CONTRACTORS

In the early 1900s the mail was carried by packhorse and then later by a mail buggy. The first mail contractor was Mr W Downman, who owned Toprain, (Memooloo) followed by Mr J Forsyth of Karvella. Mr Forsyth was probably the last contractor to use horses and the next one, Mr Arthur Bayley drove a motor vehicle on the mail run.



MR ARTHUR BAYLEY'S MAIL DELIVERY

The weekly trip went to Myrtle Park, Rhudanna, Rosell's mailbox (Underloo), Comet Downs, Togara, Mira, and Sunlight, returning via Humboldt, Springvale (Kulla), Toprain to Comet. Mr. Bayley was paid £160.0.0 (\$320.00) per year.

The next mail contractor was Mr John Martyn. The four-year contract expired on 31st December 1930. He was paid £170.0.0 (\$340.00) per annum. Sunlight Station paid an extra £14.0.0 (\$28.00) to have mail delivered to the Property. However, this contract did not include Myrtle Park, but did include Kenmare in the run. During the war years, owing to the shortage of petrol, the mail run went as far as Memooloo.

Later, Mr Sydney Powell delivered the mail as far as Sunlight once a week. During his time the mail was delivered twice weekly to Myrtle Park, Rhudanna, Milparoo, Galgartha, Nine Mile (now Monash), The Lagoons, Comet Downs, Laleham, Togara, Memooloo, Struan, Mira, Somerby, Sunlight, Humboldt and Kulla.

During the wet season of 1954 there was no deliveries for nine weeks.

Mr Trevor Kemp conducted the service for some fifteen years, followed by Mr Tom Pringle, then Mr Bruce Currie who drove the mail truck for more than twenty years. Ms Leonie Gamble is the current mail contractor on this route. With the advent of the Brigalow Development Scheme more properties have been added over the years.



TREVOR KEMP WITH HIS DELIVERY TRUCK.

With the advent of the Brigalow Development Scheme more properties have been added to the route.

Mrs Diane Currie was the last post mistress in the old Comet Post Office, having faithfully served the Comet community for 28 years.

The Comet Rest now houses the post office having taken over duties on June 30th, 2014.



THIS BUILDING HOUSED THE POST OFFICE FROM 1ST MARCH 1961 UNTIL 29TH JUNE 2014. MR EDWARD COLIN WATSON WAS THE FIRST POSTMASTER IN THE UNOFFICIAL NEW BUILDING. THEN, MRS BETTY WATSON, MRS RAELENE WATSON, MR N. C LAWLER, MRS KINDERMAN AND FINALLY MRS DIANNE CURRIE WHO OPERATED THE POST OFFICE FOR TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS.



COMET REST

The Comet Rest took over the post office duties on 30th June 2014. However, with the advent of the COVID 19 virus, this situation changed. The community was grateful to have had a continuing mail service for some time before the Comet Post Office finally closed on the 24th December, 2020. The interim time gave residents a chance to come to an agreement with Australia Post. We did not want to lose our mail service.

For some time residents were worried that they would have to obtain a post box in either Emerald, forty kilometres away to the west or Blackwater, thirty eight kilometres to the east, which would make it very difficult for the older residents to retrieve their mail.

Support for a continuing mail service came from Federal and State members, the Central Highlands Regional Council and a petition from members of the Comet and district community to persuade Australia Post that we really did need a mail service to remain in our area.

As an older resident of this community, I sincerely thank Robyn Morawitz and Debbie Smith for their continued efforts in achieving a satisfactory outcome with Australia Post which now provides a roadside mail service to residents of the town and district.

The future of the mail in Comet become a twice a week house to house mail box delivery and its surrounding properties would utilise combined delivery boxes at various points around Comet, providing a service to the Lurline Road, the Olivevale Road and the Capricorn Highway.

Compiled by Rosemary McLeod, 2017, updated in 2020.

Acknowledgements:

Mr Jim Lightfoot, Historical Officer, Australia Post, Brisbane. Q; Mr T W Kemp, Comet State School Centenary 1877/78 – 1977/78; Mr D Hutton; Mr D Rowlands; Mrs C Currie; Mr B. Currie; 1878 Cometville Survey Map.

Photos:

National Library of Australia; State Library of Queensland; Rosemary McLeod collection; Trevor Kemp collection; Robyn Morawitz Collection.