



## HERITAGE SERVICES INFORMATION SHEET NUMBER 4

### HERVEY RANGE ROAD

Next time you head west along Hervey Range Road reflect upon what the journey might have been like over 125 years ago. Although the current road does not follow the old route exactly, a sense of what people would have endured on their journey inland in the late nineteenth century can be gauged from the terrain, reading documentary sources and from the remnants of past use.

The first inland road went due west from the port of Townsville, across the Bohle and Alice rivers, climbed the range at Thornton Gap and then headed further west.

A number of hotels and camping grounds existed along the route inland over Hervey Range. These included the *Alice*, *Range* and *Eureka Hotels*. Located nearby these

hotels were camping reserves, set aside for carriers to feed and rest livestock before they continued their journeys.

The *Alice Hotel* was located on the right bank of the Alice River. The hotel provided a paddock to feed and rest travellers' horses. They often provided "change" horses for Cobb and Co coaches, as well as fresh horses for travellers who wished to move on without resting.

In 1868, Lucy Gray stayed at the Alice Hotel on her journey west to Hughenden. After an arduous journey of 15 miles (about 30 kms) she was relieved to reach the hotel where her party bathed, ate and rested. Besides her description of her stay at the hotel she included a sketch of the building in her journal (see below).



Alice Hotel





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The following day they continued their journey a further 15 miles to the foot of Hervey Range and the *Range Hotel*. It was built by James Mead in 1866 and had two sitting rooms and six bedrooms. It was described in 1878 as “very pleasantly situated. The proprietor has added to the natural beauty by planting some Leichhardt trees around the house which looks very graceful”. The hotel closed in 1884. All that remains of the hotel are the Leichhardt trees and a small cemetery.

It took travellers nearly a day to climb the range to the Eureka Hotel. As Mrs Fulford indicated in her memoirs the climb in 1870 was extremely steep and rough and at times, dangerous.

She wrote

“I walked up carrying the child, taking my time and keeping in sight of the cart coming behind me. The horses could only pull the cart up a few yards at a time, on account of the steepness, and the black-boy had to carry stones to chock the wheels to keep the cart from going backwards each time. It was a very hot morning and by the time we reached the top of the range my husband was attacked by “fever and ague.”

Teamsters often had to use two teams of horses or bullocks to haul wagons up the range.





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The Eureka Hotel which still exists today was located at Thornton's Gap on Hervey Range. After a tiring journey up the range it was a welcome sight for travellers. One elated traveller on reaching the top in 1878, stated that the

“the climate is delicious here, and a little off the road our eyes were gratified by the sight of a nicely kept garden with flowers growing profusely. ...The Eureka Hotel is nicely situated, with a little clear plain in front of the house, and plenty of dairy produce.”

The hotel building is a horizontal slab structure raised on low, round ironbark stumps and massive half round timber bearers fixed with wooden pegs. The original slab walls are visible inside the building. It is a rare example of bush

carpentry. The building is now protected by its listing on the Queensland Heritage Register.

This information on Hervey Range Road reveals Thuringowa's rich and colourful history - a history that deserves our reflection. Thus on your next trip up Hervey Range Road consider the time and difficulty involved in the journey in the late nineteenth century.

### Acknowledgements

- Peter Bell, *Graves, Range Hotel Site Thornton Gap, report to City of Thuringowa*, 1998.
- Extract from *Queensland Pioneer Book*
- Dorothy Gibson-Wilde, *The Eureka Hotel – The Best Country Stand in North Queensland*.
- Queensland Historical Heritage Citation, Eureka Hotel, Environmental Protection Agency, 2003.
- *Townsville Herald*, 13 November 1878

