

BROKEN DAM STORE



James and Margaret Fong

After their marriage in 1876, Cantonese hawker, Yie Zahn Fáng (James Fong) and his Scottish-Australian bride, Margaret, decided upon the crossroads at Broken Dam as a suitable place to establish a general store. Genial Irishman, Jerry Ryan, already had an hotel at the site.

James selected a forty acre block of land across the stock route from the hotel and built a modest three room drop-slab house/store with a detached kitchen. The most eastern of the three rooms was to serve as the store and it had a cellar excavated beneath its board floor.

In addition to passing trade along the travelling stock routes that met at Broken Dam, James and Margaret enjoyed increasing support as new families of selectors settled in the district. A third important clientele for their business were the Chinese labourers who had turned to land clearing for the Selectors as the goldfields petered out.

Twice married, (James Fong died 1890 and her second husband, Millington Clarke, died 1897), Margaret and her family of ten children, conducted the Broken Dam Store for a considerable period after the town of Ariaah Park was established in 1907.

Margaret's youngest son, Bill Clarke, married and in about 1923 he and Ellen enlarged the store as their farm homestead. After the Clarke family moved to Dubbo in 1953, the buildings became more or less abandoned and quickly deteriorated.



Mrs. Margaret Clarke with her younger children at the Broken Dam Store

