



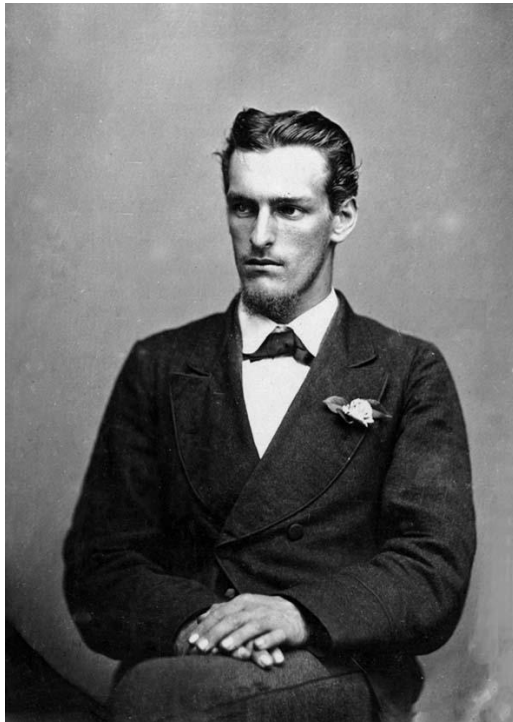
Richmond River Historical Society Inc.

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George H. Daniel, Lismore Schoolmaster

George Hancock Daniel was the third state school teacher to be appointed to Lismore and arrived in 1875. A school had been established in 1862 in a slab hut built on the corner of Keen and Woodlark Streets. Prior to this tutors or private teachers had provided the only education available.

With public education the teacher's salary was paid and some accommodation provided. Attendance fees had to be paid by parents and these were kept by the teacher partly as an incentive to boost numbers. Most residents lived in poverty and found even small fees a burden. However, most were well aware of the benefits of education and struggled to make do.



Daniel came to Lismore at a time when the District was experiencing rapid growth. The Robertson Land Act of 1861 which allowed selection of land before survey had seen rapid expansion of settlement on the Northern Rivers. By the mid-1870s most of the land south of the Richmond had been taken up and people began swarming to the Richmond and Brunswick areas.

George Daniel was from Newcastle and, although only 19, had already received his 11B certificate of competence from the Training Department and had taught in several schools. Initially he boarded with the family of Robert McKenzie whose house was opposite a new school which had been built on the corner of Molesworth and Magellan Streets. The adjoining school residence was rented to tenants.

However, the population of Lismore was increasing rapidly and the school, though relatively new, soon required more room. Daniel suggested that the wall separating the school from the residence be removed and the school take over the space. This was agreed and the tenants were asked to leave.

In 1877 Daniel married Mary Crofton of Alstonville. A new residence was built and the popular teacher was well satisfied with the result. There was a rainwater tank and other conveniences including a cooking stove to replace the usual open fireplace. By 1879 it was necessary to renovate the school building and two rooms were added to the residence to accommodate the teacher's increasing family. A pupil teacher was appointed and later an assistant teacher.

School numbers fluctuated somewhat partly because of truancy and partly because parents kept children home to help with household duties. This meant that, though overall student numbers were high the daily average was kept down. Daniel announced that a child attending for part of a week would be charged fees for the whole week. This caused some resentment but had the desired effect!

In 1880 the Public Instruction Act was passed in New South Wales. With this came compulsory education for all children between six and fourteen. An extra 50 children were enrolled in Lismore and accommodation was again a problem! It was decided to build a new school on the corner of Magellan and Keen Streets and in the meantime a huge tent was provided.

Dust was no real problem as the tent had a floor. However, in windy or wet weather it was somewhat unstable and nearly drove the teacher mad! Daniel stated that in windy weather he spent most of his time attending to the ropes to prevent the whole thing collapsing. In wet weather he had to station some of the boys outside “to stick pins in interesting looking bulges in the walls”. During storms the boys manned the tent ropes as if on a sailing ship!

By 1885, even though the foundation stone had been laid for the new school, Daniel had decided to resign. He was becoming frustrated with the whole situation and felt much older than his 29 years. Parents did not like his demands that their children should wear shoes (most could not afford them), and there were disagreements with the staff and even with the inspector.

George Daniel had brought the school through a very difficult stage and was a fine teacher. He rejoined the Department’s staff in 1889 and was appointed to Terania Creek School.

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