

The Office of Michael J. Curtin, Auctioneer

On at least two occasions in 1878, Mr Curtin sold horses at the Jerilderie sales on behalf of the 'owner', Mr Steve Hart. On the last occasion a dispute arose in which Steve Hart accused Mr Curtin of overcharging him £1; a charge indignantly denied by Curtin, with him remarking that *"for all I know they [the receipts] might be bogus ones"*.

When guarding the captives in the Royal Mail Hotel on 10 February, 1879, Steve Hart inquired as to the whereabouts of the *"Auctioneer Curtin – I've got some unfinished business with him"*. On being told that Mr Curtin was on business at the Land Board Office in Urana, Hart expressed his regret that he was unable to *"catch up with him"*.

Returning from Urana the following day, Michael Curtin heard of Steve Hart's implied threat against him, and thinking that two could play the same game, armed himself and joined the party defending the Post and Telegraph Office on the Tuesday and Wednesday nights, against the threatened return of the Kelly Gang to hold up the Urana Coach, arriving from Deniliquin.

By Thursday, Michael Curtin was so disgusted at the lack of Police reinforcements being sent to the town, including the fact that local Policeman, Trooper Richards, had been ordered to join in patrolling down on the Murray River, Curtin decided to ride to Deniliquin to express those concerns - particularly as rumour was rife that the Kelly Gang was intending to return to Jerilderie.

On his way to Deniliquin, Curtin met the coach that was transporting the bank's replacement cash, under the guard of one policeman, and carrying the two bank officials who were returning to Jerilderie, Tarleton and Living.



MICHAEL JOHN CURTIN (1839-1896) arrived in Australia from Ireland in approximately 1860, via New Zealand. On joining the NSW Police, he was posted to Jerilderie, being the first policeman to be stationed at Jerilderie, from 1862 until his resignation from the Police Force sometime after May, 1864. Curtin remained in Jerilderie working as a butcher, until February 1876 when he was granted an Auctioneer's Licence, whereupon he followed the occupation of Livestock and Real Estate Agent. On 12 May 1872 he married the widow Hedwidges Schaneck, although the record of marriage lists her name as Teresa H Gliniska, presumably that being her maiden name. Mrs Teresa Hedwidges Curtin was formerly employed at Yamma Station, north of Jerilderie, and before her first marriage she was a dressmaker, an occupation which she resumed at her new residence located on Lot 50 of Part Portion 4, Powell Street, Jerilderie. This building later

became known as the Post and Telegraph Office which was held up by Ned Kelly and Joe Byrne on 10 February 1879.

When the Municipality of Jerilderie commenced on 1 October 1889, Michael John Curtin was elected as an Alderman and, by prior arrangement between the candidates as to who topped the poll, became the Municipality's first Mayor.

Michael Curtin died on 22 August 1896, at 57 years of age, and is buried in Row A, Lot 27 of the Roman Catholic section of the Jerilderie Cemetery.

Footnote:

The adage of "*never let the truth get in the way of a good story*" seemingly knew no bounds during the period between the February 1879 raid on Jerilderie by the Kelly Gang and their re-emergence at Glenrowan in June 1880. The story appearing in the *Australasian* on 28 September, 1895, which features a photograph of Michael Curtin astride what was supposed to have been Senior Constable Devine's horse, appears to be one such story.

On Friday, 19 September, 1879 The Corowa Free Press published an account of the discovery of two horses in the Puzzle Ranges, Victoria, which answered the description of those horses stolen by the Kelly Gang from the police at Jerilderie.

They were at once driven to Benalla, and from thence forwarded to Rutherglen from whence they were brought by Senior-Constable Gribbin to Corowa on Wednesday and left at the Police Station. The horses are not in very good condition, but are evidently in better condition now than they have recently been. One, a grey horse, is a fine upstanding animal, and was formerly used by Senior-Constable Devine of Jerilderie; the other, a bay one, is a much lighter animal, which would not, except for light packing purposes, tempt the cupidity of anyone under ordinary circumstances. Both horses were sent, yesterday, on to Deniliquin, which is the head of the police district in which Jerilderie is situated.

Less than a week later the Melbourne Age carried the following story:

.....the two horses, which it is known were used by the Kelly Gang, were found by the police several months ago. The grey horse which the Kellys stole from Senior Constable Devine at Jerilderie, was first seen at the head of the King River more than two months back, and was allowed to roam the forest by the police, who kept a watch on it in the hope that some of the Kelly Gang might again attempt to use it. The Kelly sympathisers were, however, on the alert, and it is stated were aware of the action of the police. No one interfered with the horse, and finally the police took possession of it. The other horse was found at another portion of the north-eastern district. The police are still confident that the Kellys have not left Victoria.