

Home and General Store of Louis Monash

In the latter half of 1874, Louis Monash and his family moved to Jerilderie to manage, in a partnership, the general store. This business was originally established in 1869 by Henry Harris and Henry Levy, and called Melbourne House.

The other members of the partnership with Louis Monash, trading as Max Monash & Co., was Louis' brother Max, and Albert Nathan Jonsen who had, since 1868, managed a general store in Narrandera on behalf of Max Monash. In 1870, Max Monash made Mr Jonsen a partner in the Narrandera business and then, when establishing the Jerilderie branch in 1874, extended the partnership to include Louis Monash, with Louis being responsible for running the Jerilderie business.

In March 1877 the partnership involved in the Jerilderie enterprise dissolved in favour of Messrs Sydney Greenberg and Louis Monash, trading as Monash & Company. Three years later, in 1880, Max Monash also relinquished his interest in the Narrandera enterprise, with his former partner, Albert Jonsen, becoming sole proprietor.



Melbourne House, when leased by J C Prosser (1925-1950) before it was gutted by fire for the second time on Monday, 29 June, 1931. The first fire occurred in March 1892.

Persons in the photograph, from left to right: Alec Prosser, David Prosser, Joe Taylor, Chas Cowhan, Nell Boland, Ess Prosser, Ivy Horgan, Ruth Prosser, E Coope, and John Charles Prosser. Person on extreme right of photograph unidentified

Local school teacher, William Elliott, who was heavily involved in the raid on Jerilderie by Ned Kelly and his Gang in February 1879, resigned from the Education Department in 1885 to take over ownership and editorship of the Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser.

During 1913-14 Elliott wrote and published his account of the raid. Also, at that time, the budding military career of John Monash was on the ascendancy. It should be remembered that while teaching young John Monash, from October 1874 until the end of his 1877 school year, and then influencing Monash's parents to have John's higher education continued in Melbourne, a lifelong friendship developed between Elliott and John Monash, regularly writing to each other up until Monash's untimely death in 1931. This friendship led to speculation that Elliott's version of events was written with a view to protecting Monash's career prospects, with the possibility of various aspects of Elliott's story having different interpretations.

Elliott's account of the raid makes no reference whatsoever to John Monash, or any mention of any past dealings that John's father, Louis Monash, may have had with Ned Kelly, and yet he (Elliott) refers to one of the gang members Steve Hart, as being in Jerilderie *"several times during the latter end of 1877 and during the early months of 1878, with horses for sale"*.

Elliott also goes on to describe in detail an account where Hart, believing Auctioneer Michael Curtin had short-changed him £1 during their last transaction, ominously enquired after Curtin's whereabouts during the hostage scene at the Royal Mail Hotel.

Why name Michael Curtin as having dealings with members of the Kelly Gang and not Louis Monash who, on his return to Melbourne, was reported to have actually boasted of his business dealings with Ned?

Elliott does make mention of Ned Kelly being a frequent visitor to the town, but he makes no mention of any dealings or transactions that Ned may have had with any persons while in Jerilderie on the earlier visits.

Perhaps, at the time of writing his account of the raid on Jerilderie, Elliott was unaware of any admissions made by Louis Monash, but that he (Elliott) knew of, or had read, the article appearing in *The Australasian (Melbourne)* on Saturday, 28 September 1895 wherein Michael Curtin reportedly confessed to having had dealings with Hart (although not owning up to having 'diddled' Hart out of any commission).

Elliott's account of the raid refers to Louis Monash on only two occasions, the first being:

"Thunderstruck [after what he had been told by Mrs Devine at the police barracks] he [the editor of the Jerilderie and Urana Gazette, Samuel Gill] dropped the blind and made for the town as fast as he could go. Reaching Jerilderie Street, he ran down the footpath till he reached Mr Monash's store, into which he turned. He told Mr Monash and his employees his experience at the barracks, and said he could not understand it. The employees smiled at him, thinking that he was exaggerating. Leaving this unsympathetic party, he hastened on to Mr Rankin's stores."

Did Louis Monash recognise Ned Kelly when Ned walked past his store in company with Trooper Richards earlier that morning?

Had Louis Monash (and his employees) deliberately set out to divert Gill's attention from any misgivings he (Gill) may have had about something being wrong up at the police barracks?

The second reference to Louis Monash was in relation to when preparations were being made on the evening of Monday, 10 February 1879 to defend the Post and Telegraph Office against Ned and his Gang's threatened return visit to hold up the Urana coach arriving from Deniliquin:

Mr Louis Monash brought over to the Post Office to Mr Jefferson an old rusty revolver but no ammunition.

Did Louis Monash deliberately supply a rusty old hand gun but no ammunition?

There is another pause for reflection on whether Elliott's account of the raid by Ned Kelly and his gang was written with a view to protecting the (future) reputation of John Monash, and that is when reading the obituary of Sir John, which Elliott had penned and printed in his newspaper on 15 October 1931.

In that obituary Elliott was to state (in relation to older members of the Jerilderie community):

"remembered him in the old days, when they went to the Jerilderie Public School, and since then, when on the occasions of his several visits to the old town to renew his acquaintances, as well as to attend to businesses in connection with his deceased parent's estate."

The admission in the obituary in 1931 was the first and only occasion in which Elliott admitted to Sir John ever having re-visited Jerilderie.

Except for one occasion in 1898, Elliott failed to mention in his newspaper Monash's involvement as an expert witness in the late 1890's *Blackwood versus McCaughey* water rights case before the Urana Land Board.

That one reference was in relation to the Judge who was hearing the application for compensation, not allowing Sir Julian Salomons, acting on behalf of Samuel and David McCaughey, to recall John Monash to submit fresh or additional evidence.

Perhaps it was that Elliott, not wishing to antagonise either party in the water rights case, took the prudent course of remaining silent on the matter?