



COMMUNITY COLLABORATION DELIVERS HISTORICAL EXHIBITION

The name *Wallace & McGee* might not be familiar to many people, but for an older generation, the construction company was an integral part of building Dubbo and Western New South Wales, and their legacy lives on in the lives they shaped and the generations of builders they trained. The latest exhibition at Dubbo Regional Council's (DRC's) Western Plains Cultural Centre (WPCC) shines a light on this important business, through *Building Community: Wallace & McGee, Walmac and the Construction of the West* exhibition.

From the mid-1920s to the early 1980s Wallace & McGee was at the centre of the construction industry in Western NSW and was responsible for the building of most of the iconic buildings throughout our community. The new exhibition explores the company history and highlights the profound and long lasting impact that it would have on the building of our community. The exhibition opens to the public on 31 July, 2021 and covers the founding of the company to its eventual closure in the early 1980s.

This exhibition is an example of the celebration of local stories and local experiences that the Dubbo Regional Museum is committed to sharing. Cultural Development Coordinator, Jessica Moore highlighted the passion the community has for local history.

“Through SPARC: The DRC Cultural Plan, the community told us how passionate they were about hearing about our local history, the stories that make our region unique and dynamic. The story of Wallace and McGee is the archetypal Dubbo story, one of people moving to Dubbo and embracing the opportunity it offered, while being passionate about giving back to the community that had been so welcoming.”

Founded by Phil McGee and Bob Wallace in 1922, the company would grow to include a sawmill and iconic Hardware Shop in Macquarie Street. Alongside the multitude of public building projects the firm would take on, both men were passionate about education and the community and the company would train hundreds of apprentices – many of whom would go on to found their own companies as well.

“The exhibition would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and support of the community, with many people coming forward with their recollections, photographs and objects for the exhibition. This itself shows the lasting legacy of the company and the connection many still feel for it,” said Ms Moore.

“We are also proud to dedicate this exhibition to the memory of Mr Mick Wilson, who passed away a few months ago. Mick was a proud employee of Wallace and McGee and really represents the spirit of the company with his passion for community and giving back to the generations that followed him.”

Always adaptive and responsive, Wallace & McGee would expand to become a company that could grow the timber, mill it, frame it up and install it, and they would take on not only building the family home, but the local hotel, army base, school, community pool and in the case of Glen Davis – an entire town.

The exhibition will be officially opened at the end of August with an event “SMOKO” which we hope will be an unofficial company reunion. To ensure you get on our mail list, be sure to contact the WPCC at (02) 6801 4444.

Image credit: *Courtesy of DRC & Western Plains Cultural Centre*



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