

Monger's Store



This property is part of Suburban Lot A2 comprising 10 acres.

The property was applied for by Bland and Trimmer, but for some reason, in 1835 and 1836, the Government kept advertising Lot A2 as being available for grant should anyone wish to put in an offer.

The offer from Bland and Trimmer must have eventually been accepted and paid for but soon after, they sold Lot A2 and also Lot A1 on the river side, also 10 acres, to John Henry Monger Snr, for 100 pounds.

Monger first built and ran his hotel, the York Hotel on Lot A1 on the river from the second half of 1836.

In 1838, Monger's publican licence fee was doubled from 5 pounds to 10 pounds. He asked for the additional fee to be suspended, complaining that in a distant place like York, the remuneration from accommodation is limited and precarious, and that his crops had failed and he had lost some good friends to his business. This indicates that in addition to running his hotel, he was also cropping this land.

In May 1840, the Government expressed a desire to extend Avon Terrace through Monger's land, between lots A1 and A2. Monger sought compensation and after much haggling, was granted Town Lot 1 as a replacement. This is the property diagonally opposite, on which what we now call Penola House was later to be built in 1869 by Monger's youngest son George.

Monger was not popular. While the first meeting of The York Agricultural Society in August 1840 was at The York Hotel, the first secretary Peter Barrow made the mistake of presuming that its members would be pleased to patronise Monger's hotel at the dinner to be held for the first Agricultural Show. They were not and such was the hostility to this presumption that Barrow was forced to resign.

Around this time, Monger opened the original Monger's Store, commonly referred to as "Monger's", also sometimes called "Monger's Trading Post". It was the first general store established in York. Stocks such as hardware, drapery, groceries, wines and spirits, provisions and implements were sold there.

Monger's "store" was on the opposite side of Avon Terrace from the hotel, and was a "long, low building", and "every three months his wagons would journey to Guildford or Perth for supplies". The stone section on the south east corner of what is now called the sandalwood yards appears to be the remnant of this "long low building".

In 1841, Monger built a windmill. The windmill was located on two acres on the north east corner, where The York Society now is.

At the time there was a depression, "money is not to be had in the Colony, all is barter". York farmers brought their wheat, wool and sandalwood to Monger to exchange for goods.

In an 1889 interview with early settler and farmer John Taylor, who came to the York district in 1841 where the only storekeeper was Monger, Taylor said:

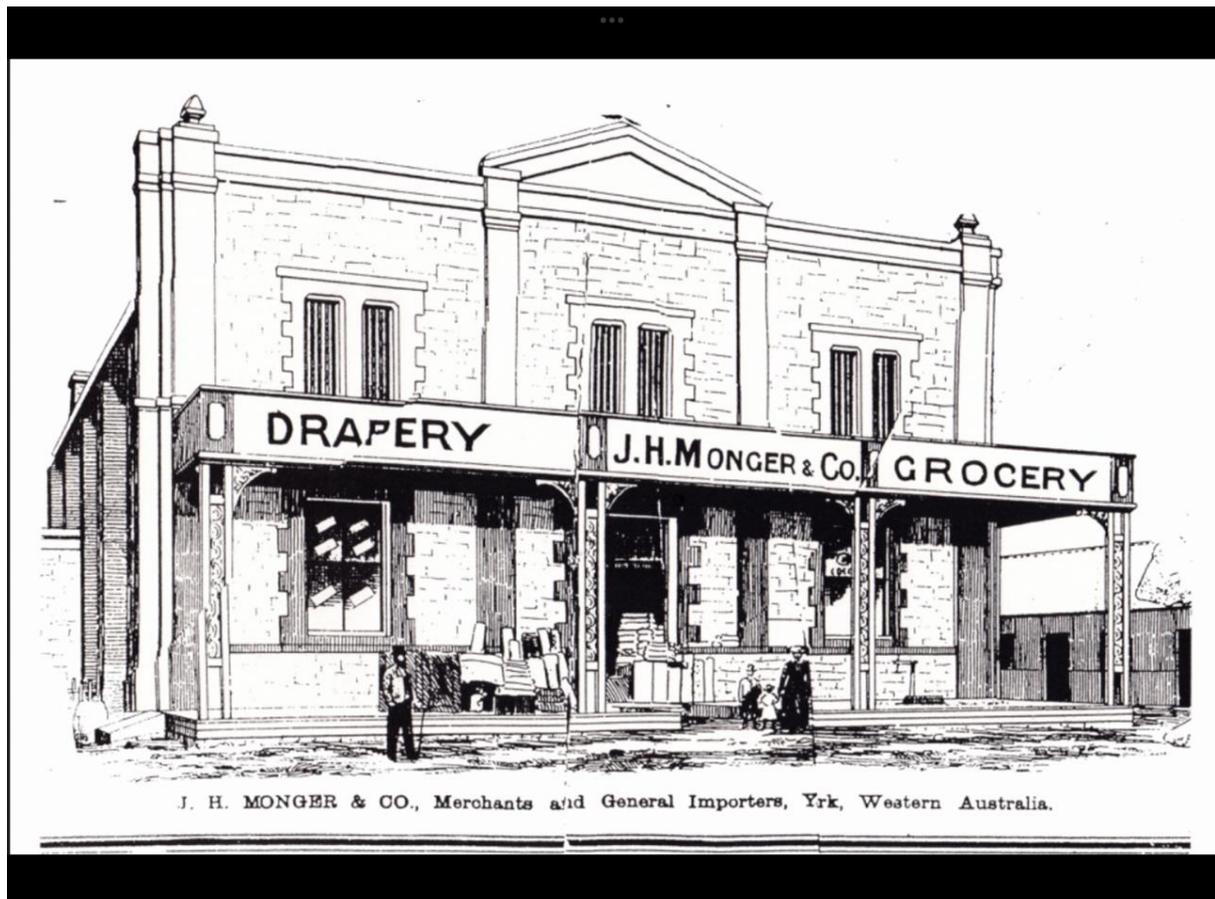
"The extortion of the store keepers is bad enough now, but it was terrible in those days. We had to give our wheat away for next to nothing and the greatest grievance of the squatters and farmers was at that time, and ought still to be, the extortion of the store men. I have lived here when I never knew what it was to have the taste of liquor or the possibility of getting it for a whole year at a time, when a pair of moleskin trousers cost me a sovereign, the price now being seven and sixpence, and at a time when I never had fresh meat, our only food being salt beef and pork from America which were charged at a fearful rate. Those were the days when the bushmen were swindled by the storekeepers. I have had to wade over fords and then often to swim with a sack of wheat in order to get stores in 'barter'."

In 1844, Lot A2 was described by Monger in an advertisement as a "paddock".

In 1854, Monger attempted to subdivide and put up for sale 16 half acre allotments, 9 on the river front and another 7 on the other side running towards Faversham, including this land. The ads describe the property as follows:

"The remaining seven allotments are in a paddock on the opposite side, with frontage to the main street, running four chains upwards to Mr Monger's house and more. For business premises or private residences, they cannot be equalled, the land is well cleared, substantially fenced in, and in a state of cultivation."

Monger and his son Joseph built a "new" York Hotel opposite this site in 1865. Then Monger died in 1867. In his will, he left Faversham and this property – Lot A2 - (except for 2 acres comprising the mill and store) to Joseph Taylor Monger, and he left the hotel on the other side of Avon Terrace (except for 2 acres, probably at the north end) to his son Joseph.



In 1878-79, John Henry Monger Jnr built a new store here and this was completed in about August 1879. The builder was Thomas Davey. It was constructed of corrugated iron with a stone front and rear. By constructing this store, John Henry Monger Jnr was competing with his brother Joseph who owned the old store.

In 1885, the property was connected to rail. Rail trucks were loaded with sandalwood, wheat, wool, fodder and other farm produce for transport to Perth and Fremantle. This also allowed the delivery to the store of grocery items, furniture, farm implements and everything else which the Mongers required for the York market.

In 1892, during the gold rush, some additions were made to the building, along with a separate brick storage building in the same year. This may be when the bakery was added at the rear.

After John Henry Monger Jnr's death in 1892, the store continued to be operated by his trustees. The business was taken over by WJ Cooper, ET Hick and GEL Wrench in 1903. The store continued to hold similar stock to that carried by the Monger family, and also acted as agents for Northern Fire Insurance Co, Millars Karri and Jarrah Co and Jas Martin & Co's Gawler, South Australia. They were also importers of John Hopkins & Co (London) whiskies, wines, brandies etc.

In 1905, inspectors counted 5,000 bags of wheat and 300 tons of compressed hay in the sheds.

In 1908, Alexander Monger became the sole owner of the business portion of Lot A2. However drought, depression and mechanisation forced him to wind up the business.

In 1918, the building was purchased by the newly formed York Co-operative, which also operated a general store from the building, specialising in goods for farming families. Later, the old flourmill was used for storing chaff and the buildings on this side fell into disrepair.

In 1963, the Coop rented Monger's Store to the Ashworths who operated an engineering and oxyacetylene welding business. It was likely around this time that the original front stone wall being removed. The stones of that wall are still on site.

In 1994, the lot was bought by RJ Baker Nominees Pty Ltd who sold the property to the current owners in 2020.

Rob Garton Smith
President
The York Society (Inc)
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