

OMEEO JUBILEE

Gold Rushes Recalled

HISTORY OF SHIRE

The Omeo Shire Council celebrated its diamond jubilee on Wednesday last. The streets were illuminated with colored lights and the Memorial Hall was crowded. Interesting speeches were delivered by Cr. J. Braid, shire president, and others. A photographic group of past-presidents and officers was unveiled.

Many stirring incidents of the early development of that part of Gippsland were recounted. It was recalled that in 1835 McFarlane established the first white settlement in Gippsland on the fertile Omeo plains. Others followed. Angus McMillan and Count Paul Strogilecki among them, and crossed the Divide to conquer the Tambo valley. McMillan was the first settler. He arrived at Ensay in 1839, having travelled from New South Wales, via Omeo plains, in that year. In 1840 Strogilecki arrived at Ensay. The year 1852 heralded the finding of gold at Livingstone Creek. The news spread rapidly and in 1856 there were 600 diggers along the creek. These diggings became known as Omeo gold fields, and in January, 1859, a gold escort with 1200 oz. of gold, left for Sale. It consisted of Cornelius Green, a gold buyer, of Omeo, his fiancée, Miss Hunter, and Constable Greene. They stayed the night at the old Tongio Hotel, since demolished, and next morning set out for Mr Dicken's store at Swift's Creek. Two men, Chamberlain and Armstrong, heard of the escort, and followed the party to within a mile of Dickens's store, fired at them, and wounded the gold buyer and constable. In the confusion the horse carrying the gold galloped off to its stable, and the outlaws lost the prize. Chamberlain then approached the gold buyer and killed him with a hatchet. The two men were subsequently brought to trial for murder and acquitted. But for at-

tempted murder of the constable they were convicted and sentenced to death.

In 1860 Charlotte Spur and Swift's Creek diggings were opened up. Tongio West, Cassells and Swift's Creek Junction became established as profitable workings. In 1870 Omeo was attached to the electoral district of Murray, and was the official headquarters of a very large district. The hotels included Miners' Arms, the Squatters' Arms, the Golden Age and the Omeo. The Omeo district produced over 1,000,000 oz. of gold, the value being £3,500,000. Most of this was procured in shallow workings. Omeo was created a shire in October 1932, the district being originally included in the Rutlandshire shire. Mr Thomas Lewis was the first president and Mr Thomas Huxton the first secretary. The shire was divided into three ridings in 1888.—"Age."