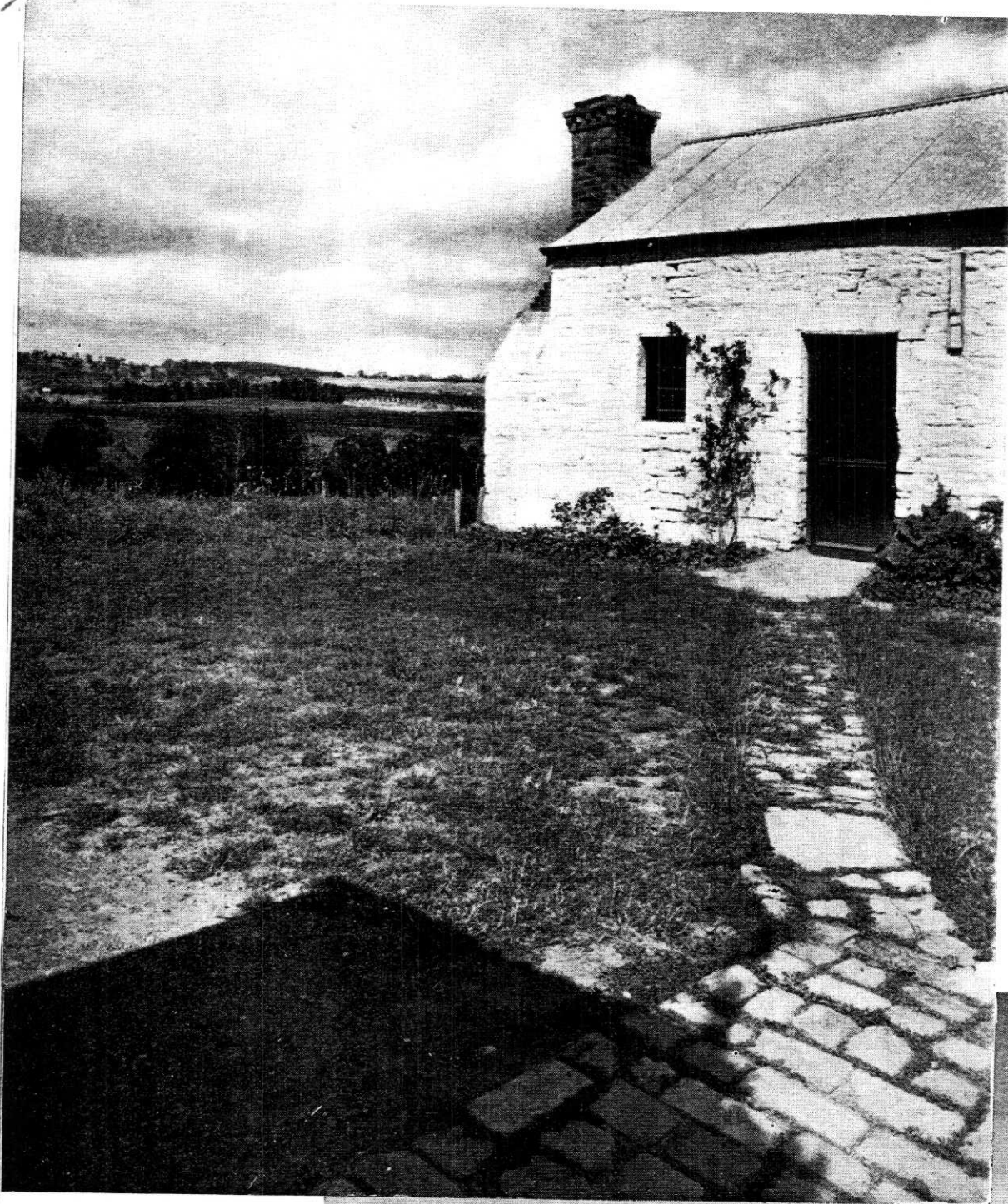


S W E E N E Y S



More like a corner of old England than young Australia is the stone built cottage above, which was part of the home commenced 100 years ago, near Eltham. It now serves as a guest room. The main residence is seen on the right, built on the lines of a Tipperary farm house by Thomas Sweeney who acquired the land in the days when blacks camped on the nearby Yarra flats.

Australian Home Beautiful
February 1, 1940. Page 6

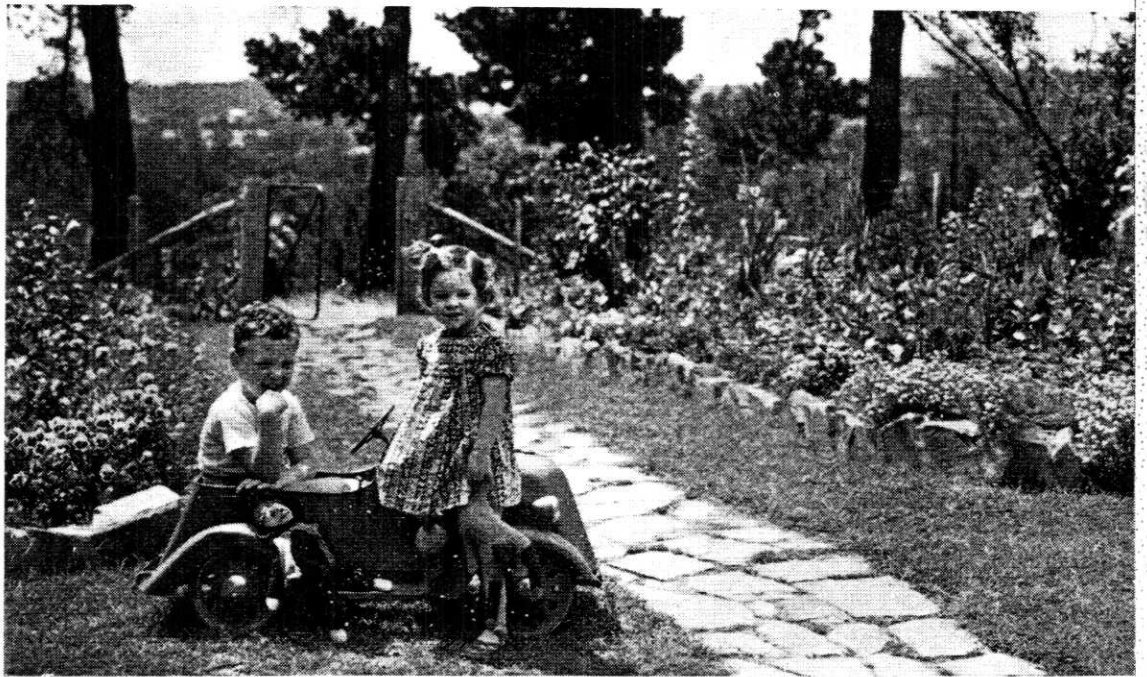


A HOME WITH A HISTORY

by
Nora Cooper



Sweeney's first home was a 12 ft. x 10 ft. shack of roughly sawn timber palings with a chimney of hand-made bricks, still standing and seen in the above picture. It now serves as a laundry. In the background are seen the cottage and barn which also belonged to the original homestead. On the right is a corner of the front garden.



IN 1837, the year Queen Victoria came to the throne, an Irishman, by

name Thomas Sweeney, farmer, sawyer and sea-captain, arrived in Melbourne from Parramatta, and at the Crown Land Sales of that year acquired 110 acres of land at a place called Culla Hill overlooking the Yarra River in the Shire of Eltham. For this he paid the sum of £1 per acre to the Port Phillip Government. The next year, equipped with tools, farm implements, a waggon and

two good working bullocks, and a couple of workmen, he set out to find his block, which lay fifteen miles east of Melbourne, hidden somewhere in the bush through which he practically had to blaze his own trail.

He found part of his land on the eastern slope of a hill with a superb view of the Yarra Valley and the rest at its foot, a fertile stretch of river flats on which were encamped a tribe of blacks,

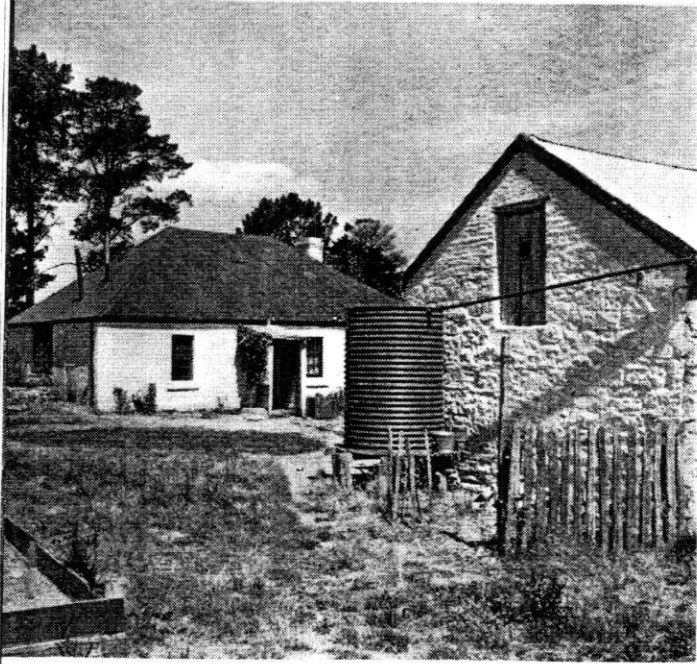
who showed a signal lack of enthusiasm at the coming of a white man, and whose ideas on the sanctity of property, especially in the matter of eggs, poultry and potatoes, were painfully undeveloped.

However, Thomas evidently must have had "a way wid him," as there are stories later of their helping make the bricks to build the homestead, and of their un-

(Continued overleaf)



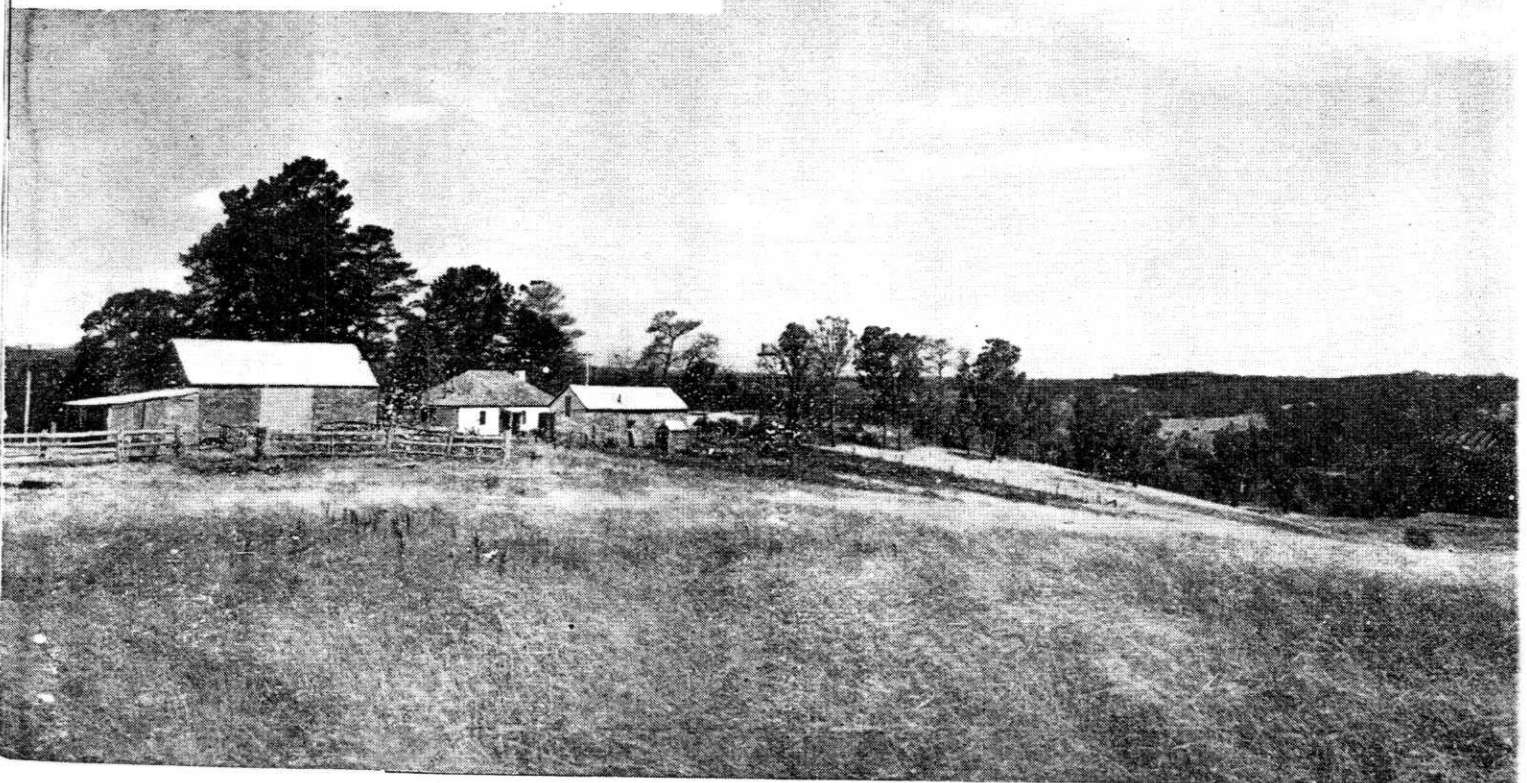
Two views of "Sweeneys" showing the rear of the original homestead with, above, the first shack; and, left, the cottage. The children's sand pit in the corner of the photo is an important new addition.



Below, view of the homestead from the paddock, christened by Thomas Sweeney, "Culla Hill," from the aboriginal name meaning "resting place by the waters."

dertaking the education of the young Sweeneys in swimming, rowing, diving and sailing canoes.

The Sweeneys' first home was a shack about 12ft. x 15ft., built of roughly-sawn timber palings and with a chimney of small hand-made bricks (which is still standing today and makes a perfectly good laundry). But after the land was cleared sufficiently to sow crops of wheat and potatoes, the work of building a permanent homestead was begun on the model of a Tipperary farmhouse, for the fashioning of which bricks were made, stone quarried from the western hill, and hardwood sawn all on the estate itself, while slates for the roof and cedar and soft woods for the interior were brought from Sydney. Besides the homestead there was also built a three-roomed detached cottage and a barn of noble proportions, the latter entirely of hand-made bricks, the colors of which today would delight the heart of an antiquarian.





Australian Home Beautiful
February 1, 1940. Page 9

When the work was finished the Sweeneys gave a ball in the new barn, in the good old rural style, and then settled down peacefully to cultivate their land and rear a family, three generations of which grew up in the homestead. For a long time the homestead was the only building of any size or importance in the neighborhood, and in the early days of Eltham it was used as a Roman Catholic church, mass being celebrated regularly in the parlor, and also the family christenings.

The name Culla Hill, derived from the old aboriginal name, "Cullagh - Cullagh," which means "resting place near the

(Continued on Page 49)

Photographs by Ralph Illidge

Parlor, entrance passage and bedroom have been transformed by the present owners into one long living room across the front of the house. The landscape window was the site of an open fireplace, but the other open fireplace at the opposite end (see below), with its original bricks and cedar mantelpiece, has been retained. Eastern rugs, and Early Victorian and Early Colonial furniture make appropriate furnishings. The room also has its original cedar doors and window frames.



SWEENEYS

(Continued from Page 9)

water," was so apt and picturesque a description of the place that it stuck, and "Sweeney's of Culla Hill" became known as a social landmark for miles around.

About twelve months ago one of the remaining Sweeneys sold the homestead and its buildings and 75 acres of land at Culla Hill to its present owners, who re-christened the house "Sweeney's" out of compliment to its pioneer founder.

It might seem as if this would be the end of the tale of Culla Hill, but actually it is not so. The present owners have rehabilitated the old farm house and transformed it into a comfortable country home without spoiling one bit of its traditional charm.

Renovations and Repairs

At first this seemed a hopeless task, but imagination and the intelligent application of modern building methods have done wonders. The old floors of

the house, rotted through being laid too near the ground, have been replaced by hardwood floors, properly excavated beneath, and dampcourses put in. The porous handmade bricks had been rendered with cream plaster to make them watertight, but the lovely old lichened slate roof has been left untouched.

What was once parlour, entrance passage and bedroom, has been transformed into one long room across the front of the house, with an open fireplace at one end, still with its original cedar mantelpiece, and two twelve-paned windows one on each side of the front door, looking on to the verandah.

The fireplace at the other end has been taken away, and incidentally has provided enough stone to make a flagged path from the gate and build up a low rockery wall in the garden. In its place is a deep alcove

with a landscape window extending its full width, the space on either side of the alcove being utilised to enlarge the kitchen and bathroom.

The bathroom projects out in front at one end of the verandah and is entirely modern in its equipment.

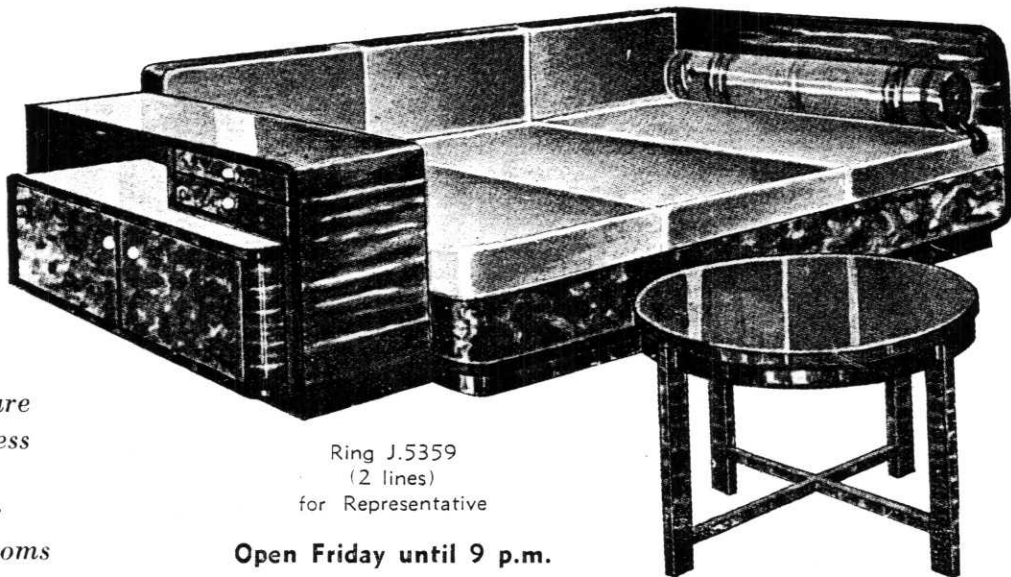
The kitchen is behind the living room with windows looking over the hills at the back of the house, and its old farmhouse charm is by no means destroyed by a modern coke-burning range set in the recess, and an efficient looking refrigerator on the opposite wall. A short passage from the living room separates the kitchen from a nursery bedroom on the other side.

To peep into the main bedroom through its door beside the living room fireplace is to go straight back a hundred years in time, for it is a long narrow room, projecting in front to the edge of the verandah, with windows in each end, and a hefty stone fireplace in the

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centre of the inside wall which virtually divides one end from the other. It is furnished characteristically with a low four-poster bed and sprigged valances and curtains, mahogany chest and wardrobe and a carved mahogany framed dressing mirror.

The living room still has its original cedar doors and window frames. Walls and ceilings are papered in plain white, the ceiling paper showing a small satin spot design. Woven Eastern rugs, in dark reds and blues cover the bare polished floor, and grouped near the fireplace are an Early Victorian sofa and easy chairs covered in plain wine red fabric, and an old walnut S chair which was part of the old house and which has a new cover of glazed chintz. A mahogany writing desk under the window, shelves of books on the wall above the sofa and a wireless cabinet by the fireplace satisfy modern comfort ideas

without spoiling the farmhouse feeling. Dining table and chairs, in Early Colonial style, are at the other end of the room by the landscape window, together with a high old farmhouse dresser, stained a beautiful weathered brown, and filled with bright colored china.

The landscape window has a built in seat beneath it, cushioned to match the curtains which are of soft cream cotton fabric, printed in a Persian design in red and blue.

One of the rooms in the stone built cottage behind the homestead has been made into a charming guest chamber. With its chintz bedspread and curtains, huge fireplace and thick walls and a window beside the bed looking out over the river it is a cool and peaceful retreat which anyone might envy.

Garden Transformation

Energetic reconstruction and twelve months care have brought the garden back won-

derfully. Grass grows once more up to the edge of the deep verandah porch which is now repaved with smooth cement slabs, stained a soft green, and dahlias, phlox and petunias overflow the flower beds by the gate.

The ancient pear trees and the spindle tree, planted by an early Sweeney, have recovered their vigour and make a lovely frame for the cream walls, dark green verandah posts and old grey roof of the farmhouse. The road comes to a dead end outside the gate so that the sense of seclusion and remoteness is very much the same as it must have been in Thomas Sweeney's day.

Opposite the gate on the other side of the road is a row of pine trees, very tall but sufficiently spaced to frame a glimpse of the river running at the foot of wooded slopes which except for a tell-tale roof or two look as if they have never known the touch of man.

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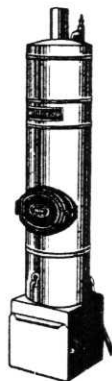
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COOKERY : (Continued from Page 44)

Potato Fritters

FOR the filling, scraps of any cold meat chopped finely and seasoned with salt and pepper may be used.

To bind the prepared meat together blend smoothly a heaped teaspoonful of flour with a quarter of a cupful of stock. Bring to the boil stirring all the time. To this add about a cupful of prepared meat. Mix thoroughly and turn on to a plate till cold.

To make the potato paste, knead a level tablespoonful of flour sifted with a pinch of salt into each heaped tablespoonful of cold mashed potato. When the mixture is smooth roll it out thinly. Stamp it out in rounds about the size in diameter of a breakfast cup.

Put a small spoonful of the cold meat mixture on each round. Fold over the paste and press the edges securely together.

Have ready a large saucepan with fat deep enough to float the fritters. Heat the fat to boiling point — when a faint bluish smoke rises from it. Put in the fritters several at a time. Too many will cool the fat and take it off the boil. Fry till browned then drain on kitchen paper. Turn on to a hot dish and keep hot while frying the remainder.

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Will any reader who has a copy of February, 1933, Home Beautiful to give away or sell please drop a note to the Editor Home Beautiful, Flinders Street, Melbourne.