

Over its life, activities within the factory included the grinding of wheat to flour (in its early life), and the making of tins and boxes to package products. At one time it also operated its own creamery and blacksmithing premises.

Produce from the factory included biscuits and jam, and later wedding cakes and Jewish Passover bread. Between 1850 and 1860 the factory was producing over 70 tons of biscuits per annum, which was said to be four times the quantity consumed in Adelaide per year. Many of the biscuits were supplied to the other Australian States and exported further afield to other British colonies. In 1883 the **South Australian Register** newspaper reports,

"... 350 tons of jam will be turned out ... sixty-two persons are employed ... most of the fruit used is of South Australian growth [the factory] has four separate storeys ... six coppers heated by steam ... as soon as batches [of biscuits] are packed they are carried off by eager buyers ..."

At its peak, 50 to 60 people from the local community and surrounding areas were employed working in the factory, while in 1892, the factory was reported as turning out over 100 varieties of biscuits. Over these years, Murray & Sons earned significant awards and accolades for jam and biscuits in the many colonial and international exhibitions that they entered.

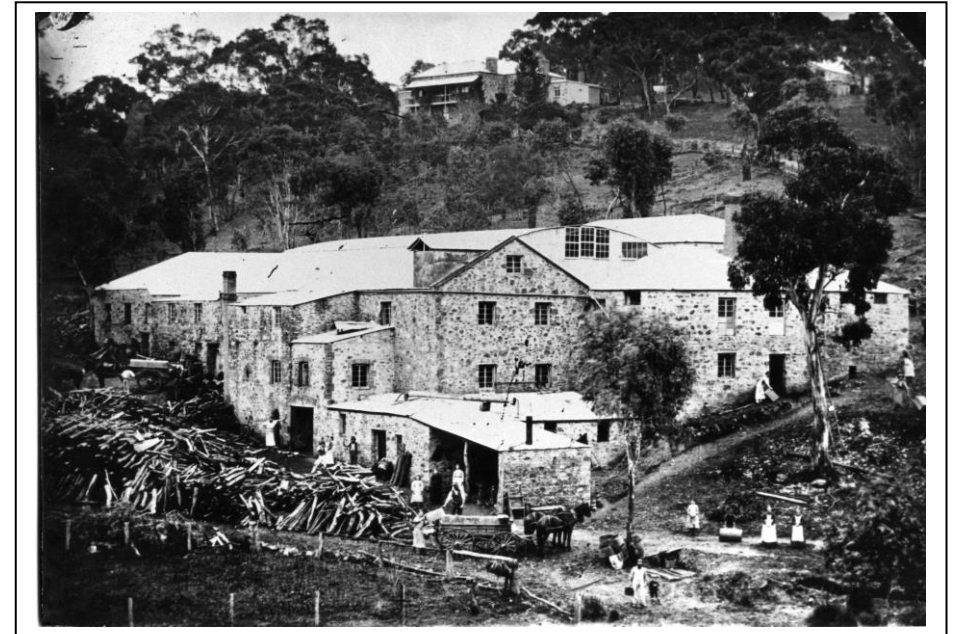
The factory facilities and its grounds were frequently used by community groups and organizations for picnic and social events. This is seen as a clear reflection of the Murray's strong commitment to, and involvement with, the local and wider Adelaide community.

After the death of Alexander Jr in 1898, the factory only survived another five years, closing in 1903. The reasons for its closure are not clear. Distance from the city, competition from other more modern Adelaide baking and confectionary businesses, and from those interstate after Federation, together with the loss of Murray managerial expertise, may have had an impact on the business.

Much of the building was demolished during the early 1900s and the stone used by Mr. Hewett for construction of buildings in the Blackwood area. Other local residents also made use of the materials from the demolition. A small part of the factory remains and is currently used as a residence.



Coromandel Valley and Districts Branch
**The Murray Family and the
Jam and Biscuit Factory**
Coromandel Valley



This image shows the four storey Jam and Biscuit Factory (c1880) and in the background, the Murray house 'Craiglee'. That there was such a significant enterprise and imposing structure in Coromandel Valley always intrigues visitors. The delicious aromas of jam and biscuit making must have filled the air at times in those early days.

Between 1844 and into the early 1900s, the Murray family lived, toiled, worshipped, entertained and gave of their expertise and community spirit to the then small community of Coromandel Valley. The contributions of the Murray family are altogether noteworthy in colonial history.

Their house 'Craiglee' and remnants of the Jam and Biscuit Factory still can be seen today from the Sturt River Linear Park walking track just north of the Institute.

The Murray Family

Alexander Murray arrived from Scotland in 1840 on the ship 'India' with his wife, Jane, their two very young children, Alexander Jr. and Peter Albany, and his sister, Elizabeth. Accompanying them was **James Craig** (who was Jane Murray's brother) and his family. James and Alexander had purchased land in the Morphett Vale area before emigrating. Both men started their colonial lives as farmers. Alexander farmed for four years at Morphett Vale, during which time a daughter, Jean Eliza, was born. In 1844 Alexander bought 10 acres of land at Coromandel Valley from the **Rev. Samuel Gill** who had married Alexander's sister, Elizabeth, some two years earlier. The Murrays called this property 'Craiglee'. After the initial purchase, Alexander planted a variety of fruit trees, which in later years were to provide fruit for jam-making. One of Alexander Murray's major achievements was to later build the Murray & Sons Biscuit and Jam Factory.

In addition to his entrepreneurial skills, Alexander Murray Sr. displayed talents in the areas of invention, painting and politics. As a member of the Philosophical Society, he is said to have invented an early fire extinguisher, which he demonstrated in the passageway of the building in which they were meeting. As an inventor, he also had plans for the design of a crop reaper (about the time of Ridley). He proposed the building of a dam across Brownhill Creek and having the clean water piped to supply Adelaide. As part of this scheme he envisaged utilizing the energy generated by the fall of the water to drive a mechanism to pull railway trucks up the Port Road to Adelaide using an endless chain loop. (The water supply scheme was later implemented, but probably not directly as a result of Murray's ideas.)

Alexander was also a skilled amateur water colour artist who recorded numerous early settlement scenes. In 1844 he returned to Great Britain to display over 50 of his paintings to promote the new colony in Glasgow and London.

His stint in politics was brief, (less than a year), being elected to the State Parliament at a by-election but losing the seat at the next general election. He was a strong supporter of free enterprise and trade.

Alexander Sr. died in 1880, aged 77, and the business was run by his son **Alexander Jr.** who had inherited many of his father's traits. Besides continuing the running of the Biscuit Factory he was reported as being of kind and noble nature and because of this he was loved and respected,

and always found time for religious and philanthropic duties. His genial disposition and his public spiritedness won him a place in the affections of the local community, and as an employer he also enjoyed the respect of the workers.

He, too, is credited with being "*a very ingenious mechanician who has supreme control and oversight of every department of the business.*" Following in his father's footsteps, Alexander Jr. was a Mitcham Council member and later Chairman of the Council. In December 1898 when returning home in the early evening after a council meeting, he was injured in an incident with his horse and died two days later. Accounts of his funeral reported on the major community response that reflected the respect that was widely shared.

The Murrays were instrumental in the establishment of the Coromandel Valley Baptist Church, continuing improvements to the local school, and the building and success of the Coromandel Valley Institute in bringing the community together. Their place in the history of Coromandel Valley is confirmed by the substantial memorial to them that was erected in the local cemetery. It was funded entirely by voluntary contributions from the community.

The Jam and Biscuit Factory

Alexander Murray Sr. had bought his Craiglee property in 1844 and planted fruit trees and sought to acquire more land, working towards the outcome of one of his schemes - the Jam and Biscuit Factory.

In order to accomplish this, he had sought the financial backing of his wife's brother-in-law, **Peter Cumming**, who was a wealthy drapery merchant in Glasgow. At the end of 1844, Alexander went to Scotland and persuaded Cumming to emigrate with his wife, Elizabeth, and family. By the mid-1850s, Alexander had purchased further land in the vicinity. By 1857 the fairly substantial original factory had been built by **John Weymouth**, using local stone quarried nearby, and biscuit and jam production had begun on a more commercial scale.

Over time the factory grew to a four-storey building. It progressed from using horses to operate somewhat unsophisticated machinery, to steam power, with increasing mechanisation. Alexander Murray Sr. made the hazardous trips back to Britain in 1845 and in 1876 to America, both times for the purpose of buying improved machinery.