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RARE LOOK AT INVERELL’S HISTORY

RESIDENTS will have a rare chance to view a piece of Inverell’s history at Inverell Library this month, with a two-week exhibition featuring one of the community’s founding identities.

The exhibition centres on George Cruickshank, a pastoralist and parliamentarian who, in the late 1880s, owned vast swathes of prime farmland throughout the Inverell District, including the properties of Byron and Bannockburn.

Mr Cruickshank was elected as the Member for Inverell in the New South Wales parliament in 1889 and went on to become the Member for Gwydir in the first federal government after Federation in 1901.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is a hand painted photographic album, presented to Cruickshank at a community banquet following his election to federal parliament.

The album was found by chance in a London attic in 1998 and now remains on permanent loan to Inverell Shire Council.

One of three in existence, it features photographs of Inverell township and the Macintyre River in the late 1800s, including rare images of the original Inverell Showground with stately grandstand and a bustling Otho Street.

Inverell Shire Council general manager Paul Henry says Mr Cruickshank’s permanent imprint on Inverell can be seen to this day, as the man behind some of Inverell’s most celebrated architecture.

“Mr Cruickshank provided the funds for building the Inverell Club in Evans Street and also injected an unheard-of 13,000 pounds for the construction of the Byron Arcade in 1902.”

“He really was a leader and innovator of his time. He was widely attributed for securing the railway line from Moree to Inverell, a bridge at Inverell across the Macintyre River, as well as a post office building.”

Accounts of Cruickshank indicate he was also known as a philanthropist, who earned hero status among residents for funding admission to Ashton’s Circus for all Inverell children in 1888.

His premature death in 1904 at the age of 48 was widely reported in local and state media and led to the dispersal of the Byron Estate by 1905.

The exhibition will remain in place for two weeks at Inverell Public Library.

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Image: Resident Betty Moore enjoys the historic Cruickshank album with Library Manager Sonya Lange.

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