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A personality of quite another kind was Johan 'Jack' Hansen, who lived a hermit-like existence on his lonely farm at Nine-Acre Rock—a 130-hectare property 14 kilometres east of Brookton. He had some of the qualities and survival skills of Robinson Crusoe (without a Man Friday); the buildings he erected at the foot of the rock were made mainly from natural stone and timber but were masterpieces of ingenuity. Huddled in the lee of the rock, they sheltered horses, cows, pigs, sheep, a dog and Hansen himself, who seemed to draw strength from the proximity of the granite like a man on the run from a troublesome past.¹¹

Hansen's past had, indeed, been troublesome. A Danish national, he was a crew-man on a whaling ship that called at Albany in the first years of the century. Tired of being bullied by other crew members, he literally jumped ship in Albany Harbour and swam ashore, successfully dodging rifle fire from the ship's officers. With little English and no money, he nevertheless made his way to the Eastern Goldfields, walking most of the way. Here he became a member of small prospecting groups that valued his night-watch-keeping skills.¹² In 1907, Hansen arrived in Brookton and took up Rockside East, the hilly little property at Nine-Acre Rock. It was to be his home until his death in 1961 at the age of 81. His 54 years in the district qualified him as one of Brookton's most enduring pioneers. He left the district only once on a day trip to Narrogin with a neighbouring farmer.

A small, slight man with a neat beard and a gentlemanly manner, he was seen in the town only on Thursdays, when he took his produce to market in his horse-drawn dray. This was mainly fruit and vegetables from his well-maintained orchard and garden. He returned with stores to eke out his meat supply of kangaroos and rabbits. His skills as a shipwright were of little use at Nine-Acre Rock but his manual dexterity enabled him



Jack Hansen (extreme right) at his beloved Nine-Acre Rock in 1949. There to buy oranges and to enjoy afternoon tea were (l. to r.) Lorna Heithersay, Norm Heithersay, Fay Severin, Eva Heithersay, Helena Marsh, Doug Marsh (standing) and Louis Severin.

to create axles and pulleys from bush timber and grass-tree butts, make his own bolts and nails on his rough forge, and build his own baker's oven and meat smoker. He contrived a hay shed on several levels, enabling him to gravity-feed chaff to his horse troughs by pulling on a rope near his bed. His water system also relied on gravity; water was siphoned from a pool high on the rock to supply kitchen and bathroom. Down the years, he learnt to break in horses for neighbouring farmers, and became known widely as 'the animal doctor,' often being called on to treat mastitis and birth difficulties in cows.

As an illegal immigrant, he felt he could not apply for a pension for fear of losing his farm. Nevertheless, increasing frailty drove him to do so two years before his death. Jack Hansen had asked that he be buried beneath the rock that had sustained him for most of his life. The authorities said No. He lies in Brookton cemetery with a piece of his beloved Nine-Acre Rock as his headstone-an appropriate touch for a man who preferred a wilderness on the other side of the world to his native Denmark.