



Local History News



In this issue:

Local History Awards 2020

Past Pandemics

Golden Age Polio Centre

East Perth Power Station

Silver Anniversary – 25 Years of Vincent

Mount Hawthorn Heritage Trail

Vincent Heritage Hero – Marie Slyth

What's New?

Can You Help? Golden Age Photos



One small positive of our COVID confinement in recent months is that homebound local residents have become more interested in

the stories behind their homes, streets and local neighbourhoods. Requests for house and street histories and queries about laneway naming continue to come in via phone or email.

The good news is the Local History Centre is now open again. As restrictions ease, we are gradually returning to regular hours and

services. Stay tuned for information about accessing the Local History Centre and about future events and workshops.

From July to September, we will be inviting written and photographic entries in the 2020 City of Vincent Local History Awards. As per last year, we will be calling for historic and contemporary perspectives on life in Vincent. We are especially interested in any photos or stories about life during COVID-19 in our streets and suburbs. 2020 is the 20th anniversary of the Awards and we hope this will be our best year for entries yet.

Dr Susanna Iuliano
Senior Librarian, Local History Centre



Follow us on Facebook:
facebook.com/vincentlibrary

WEBSITE:
<https://library.vincent.wa.gov.au/local-history-centre.aspx>

CONTACT:
Mon-Friday: 9am – 1pm by appointment

PHONE: 9273 6534
EMAIL: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au

COVER IMAGE:
Girls dressed for Saturday night dance at the WA Italian Club, 1950s.
COV LHC PHO5932

WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?



Miss Green's Grosvenor Kindergarten students at Hyde Park, 1937.
COV LHC PHO05687

Local History Award 2020	4
Past Pandemics	5
Golden Age Polio Centre	9
East Perth Power Station	11
Silver Anniversary – 25 Years of Vincent	13
Mount Hawthorn Heritage Trail	15
Vincent Heritage Hero – Marie Slyth	16
What's New? Retromaps	18
Can you help? Golden Age Photos	19

LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS 2020

We're calling for entries in the 2020 Local History Awards. Submissions open 1 July and close 30 September 2020.

We invite written and photographic entries on subjects such as:

- People or groups in Vincent (individuals, families, local artists, businesses, community groups, sporting clubs, schools and religious or charitable groups);
- Places in Vincent (histories of houses and buildings, streets, lanes, parks, trees or landmarks);
- Events (historic or contemporary) in the Vincent area. This year, we are especially encouraging of entries documenting the impact of COVID-19 on local people and communities in Vincent.

The Awards are open to everyone including non-residents, provided the subject matter is about people, places or events in Vincent. All entries become part of the City of Vincent Local History Collection.

An independent judging panel will assess all entries and award prize winners in the following categories:

Written Entries: Geoffrey Bolton Award: Life in Vincent

- 1st prize - \$500
- 2nd prize - \$250
- 3rd prize - \$150

Photographic Entries

Category 1: Historic Images (Pre 2000)

- 1st prize: \$200
- 2nd prize: \$100
- 3rd prize: \$50

Category 2: Contemporary Images (Post 2000)

- 1st prize: \$200
- 2nd prize: \$100
- 3rd prize: \$50

People's Choice Award: \$100 for the most popular photo, historic or contemporary.



Miss Macedonia Charity Queen, North Perth c 1970s. 2019 Local History Awards photo entry by Sophia Bogoiias. COV LHC PH05885



"Typhoid Demon: A Hideous Reality" Illustration from the W.A. Bulletin, 30 June 1888.

PAST PANDEMICS

"These are unprecedented times." That phrase has launched countless media reports about COVID-19 over the last few months. While the virus itself is new, and there are unique challenges we face responding to infectious disease in a globalised world, epidemics and pandemics are not unprecedented. Looking at how our local communities have been affected by and dealt with past health crises can help us put the current challenges in a broader perspective.

While Western Australia's geographic isolation, relative wealth and scarcity

of population has meant the state has often been spared the worst impacts of global health crises, it has not been untouched by pandemics past.

In the early years of the Swan River colony, introduced infectious diseases such as smallpox, measles and influenza had severe and devastating impacts on Aboriginal communities. Infectious diseases also sporadically affected the European population, including residents of the areas that now make up Vincent.

TYPHOID IN THE CITY

A Reply to Dr. Seed

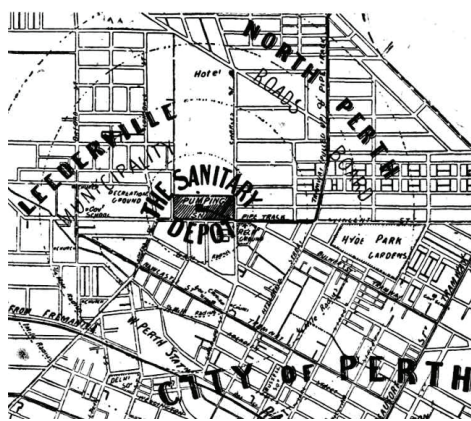
Who Denies There is an Epidemic in Perth-- Official Figures Quoted-- To the Medical Officer's Discomfiture-- Numerous Cases in the Hospitals

Newspaper Headline from the Sunday Times, 5 March 1911

In the 1890s, Western Australia suffered a major typhoid epidemic on the Goldfields with around a 2,000 recorded deaths between 1896 and 1905. An infectious food and water-borne disease, typhoid is linked to poor sanitation and overcrowding. As typhoid survivors remain lifelong carriers, those who later moved from the Goldfields to Perth caused sporadic ongoing typhoid outbreaks in the city as late as the 1950s.

In Perth's inner suburbs in the early 1900s, the push to improve sanitation and waste disposal was driven largely by the threat of infectious diseases like typhoid. In North Perth, health concerns were focused around areas like Smith's Lake (which then included most of Charles Veryard Reserve) and Beatty Park, which was the former site of the Perth Sanitary Depot at which 'night soil' or 'dunny carts' deposited human waste. In 1903, North Perth got its own Local Board of Health and in 1910, successfully petitioned

to move the Perth Sanitary Depot away from homes to a then more isolated bushland site in Mount Lawley (now the Mount Lawley Golf Club). With gradual improvements in sanitation and water treatment, the threat of typhoid dissipated. However as late as 1958, there was a typhoid outbreak in Perth linked to swimmers infected at City Beach by bacteria coming from the sewerage outfall pipe at Swanbourne. Throughout the 20th century, the incidence of typhoid fever in Australia steadily declined due to the introduction of vaccinations and improvements in public sanitation and hygiene. Chlorination of drinking water also made a significant impact on the number of individuals affected by the disease.

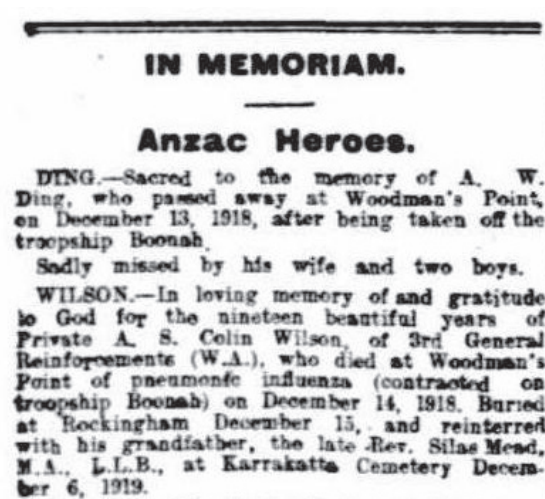


The Perth Sanitary Depot, *The West Australian*, 15 June 1901.



Obituary for Colin Wilson, *Western Mail* 27 December 1919.

The most severe pandemic in recent history was the Spanish Flu of 1918/1919 which killed an estimated 12,000-15,000 Australians (estimate of global deaths vary from 20 to 50 million). The virus spread in Europe toward the end of WWI and arrived in Australia via returning soldiers in early 1919. With no vaccine or antibiotics then available, control was limited to isolation, quarantine (at Woodman Point Quarantine Station) and use of disinfectants. In October 1918, a ship carrying returning Australian soldiers infected with Spanish Flu, was barred from docking at Fremantle to avoid causing an outbreak. With echoes of the modern day story of the Artania cruise ship, soldiers on the Boonah were stranded and the



sick were ferried to the quarantine hospital at Woodman Point. Among the dead was local lad Colin Wilson of West Perth. Colin was the son of the Secretary of the Perth YMCA and grandson of Baptist Minister Silas Mead, who laid the foundation stone of the former North Perth Baptist Church at 315 Fitzgerald Street (now a yoga studio).

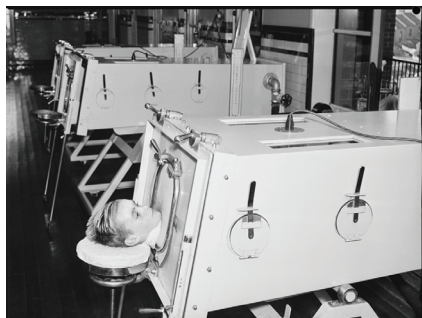
An outbreak of Spanish Flu was avoided in 1918, but a year later in July 1919, Spanish flu infections spiked in Perth following mass gatherings for 'Peace Day' and "Peace Night" the public celebrations of the end of WWI after the Treaty of Versailles was signed.

POLIO EPIDEMIC UNABATED IN WEST AUSTRALIA

PERTH, Friday.

Figures released this evening show that the polio epidemic continues with unabated force.

Twenty-two new cases, including five from three days, bringing the total for the year to the country, have been reported in the past 135.



Child in iron lung, 1938 SLNSW FL9715897

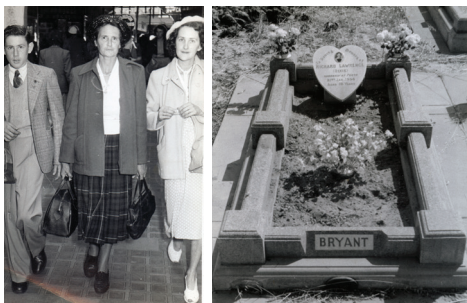
The mid-century epidemic of polio looms large in the living memories of many senior residents as one of the most frightening diseases to affect Australians. Poliomyelitis is a highly contagious viral infection spread through infected faeces. Prior to the development of the Salk and Sabin vaccines in the 1950s and 60s, polio caused permanent paralysis and sometimes death, most often in children.

Between 1944 and 1954, polio killed more than 1000 people in Australia. Sporadic outbreaks of polio occurred in Western Australia in: 1948 (311 cases); 1954 (436 cases coinciding with the visit to Perth of Queen Elizabeth II); and from January to May 1956 (401 cases with 12 deaths). Among the victims of the last polio outbreak in Western Australia was Mount Hawthorn lad Richard Bryant.

Richard was a fit and healthy eighteen year old from Buxton Street Mount Hawthorn who contracted polio in January 1956. Richard became ill on

a Saturday and was dead by Monday leaving his distraught parents in shock and grief for many years later. He was the second child in the Bryant family to be afflicted with polio.

His younger brother Harold contracted the disease a few years earlier and survived but was left permanently incapacitated. Richard's death was particularly tragic occurring just a few months prior to the introduction of the Salk vaccination program for Western Australian children which began in June 1956.



Richard Bryant, mother Rebecca and his sister Janet photographed outside London Court, 1953.

Richard Bryant's gravestone at Karrakatta Cemetery, in 1956.



Children in the Golden Age Polio Convalescence Centre in Leederville with members of the Leederville Salvation Army, 1950. COV LHC PHO2539 and PHO2538

THE GOLDEN AGE POLIO CENTRE

The Golden Age is a novel by Australian writer Joan London that was published to much critical acclaim in 2015. The title refers to its real life setting, the Golden Age children's post-polio convalescence centre which operated in Leederville between 1949 and 1959. The Golden Age offered nursing care, physiotherapy and school lessons for polio patients who varied in age from 16 months to 12 years old. The building was constructed around 1897 as The Golden Age Hotel on the corner of Alfred and Harrogate streets, Leederville. In 1921, after several charges over Sunday trading and other misdemeanours, their license was not renewed. In 1926 owners The Swan Brewery gave it to the Children's Protection Society at a rental of one shilling per month for

use as a day nursery and baby and mother-craft clinic. In 1949 the State Government purchased the building to create a convalescence home for children with polio who were long term patients. This helped to free-up beds in Princess Margaret Hospital for other sick children with less long term ailments. In 1958, the hospital was converted to a training school with accommodation for nurses. The building was demolished in the late 1960s making way for construction of the Mitchell Freeway.

Geoff Venables, grandson of Leederville business pioneer John Venables, grew up on Southport Street just around the corner from the Golden Age post-polio centre for children.

“ It is early 1950s, World War II had been ended some 5 years and economic times were still tough as the war servicemen were endeavouring to pick up their lives after the long years of firstly the depression and then war, which had taken their toll. I was 5 years old at this time and lived at 14 Southport Street not 200 metres from the Golden Age Hospital.

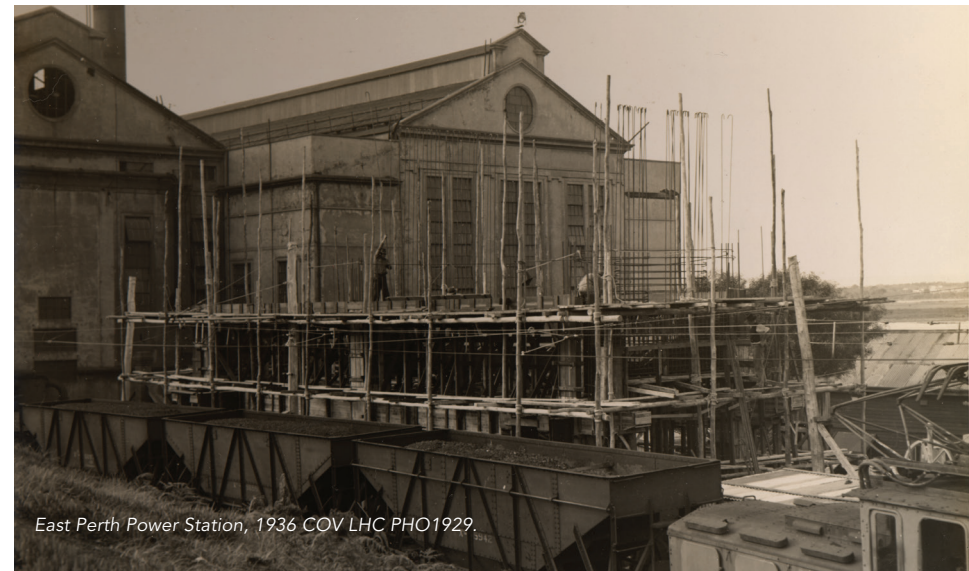
As a child I had often walked past the hospital and saw the children in the high side cots with their leg irons. As a boy, I did not understand the ramifications of polio also there were kids at school who were referred to as ‘special’ or ‘spastic’ kids for they were different. The Queen’s Australian 1954

visit was almost called off (because of polio). I attended Thomas Street State School, which was next to Perth Modern School and opposite Princess Margaret Hospital. I recall seeing the children on the hospital side from where we were waiting for a glimpse of the Queen and Duke as they drove past.

In 1953, Jonas Salk’s polio vaccine was introduced to the world which virtually eradicated the polio curse that had affected thousands of Australians. To think today there are those in the community that, question their rights as to immunising their children against a preventable virus.” (Geoff Venables)



Sister Patricia Bryan in the back garden of the Golden Age polio convalescent centre. (Undated newspaper clipping provided by Ron Venables).



East Perth Power Station, 1936 COV LHC PHO1929.

EAST PERTH POWER STATION

The East Perth Power Station was built in 1914 and provided Perth with electricity from 1916 until it was decommissioned in 1981. It was the only government operated electricity utility supplying the metropolitan area from 1916 to 1951. It was also the largest power generating facility in the state until South Fremantle Power Station began operation in 1951. The site was included in the municipal and state register of heritage places in the 1990s for its cultural significance and industrial heritage. It fell into disrepair for decades until the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority undertook remediation work to stabilise the building in 2004-2006.

There have been various ideas and proposals to redevelop the site over the last two decades. In April 2020, the State Government announced that local developers (backed by Kerry Stokes and Andrew Forrest) were going to revitalise the site making it the eastern gateway to the Perth CBD. The development has been given a Noongar name, Koomba Kalark, which translates to ‘the place of the big fire’, a reference to the former coal-fired power station.

The history of the power station was documented in 2006/07 by researchers from Curtin University in collaboration with a range of partners

including the City of Vincent Local History Centre. The project resulted in a book, *Powering Perth: a history of the East Perth Power Station* (2011) edited by Lenore Layman. Interviews with over a hundred men and women who lived in and around the East Perth Power Station are available for reading in the City of Vincent Local History Centre.

We are currently scanning and uploading transcripts of the interviews to our online catalogue to make them more easily accessible for people to read online. The transcripts make fascinating reading on how electricity changed the living conditions of Perth people and about the working lives of power station employees.



East Perth Power Station building 2006. COV PHO2168



East Perth Power Station Staff, December 1981. COV LHC PHO1984

"It was black down there because coal dust makes everything black, and the bloke who worked down there, he'd look up at you and you could just see little white spots and that was his eyes. If he grinned, you might see his teeth." Excerpt from interview with Neil Byrne (2006).

"We were working up on the switch and there was this almighty explosion. We turned around – he was standing there like Joan of Arc, with a ladder on the overhead busbars and he was just in a bright blue light. Instantaneous; fell to the ground. He lasted four days. His overalls were blown off him... His skin just parted from his body... We were ordered out of the switchyard by our box. I was in shock. I went home from work. I could not walk into the switchyard after that..." Excerpt from interview with Barry Goldman (2006).

"We had a responsibility to the community and generally we had an obligation to ensure that we did work to a high standard so that people didn't suffer power outages basically... There was a general pride in the workmanship, pride in what we did because we knew it was important." Excerpt from an interview with Kevin Wulff (2006)

25 YEARS OF VINCENT

2020 marks the 25th anniversary of Vincent as a local government authority.



First Mayor of the Town of Vincent Jack Marks.

On 1 July 1994, the restructure of the City of Perth created three new local governments including the Town of Vincent. Commissioners were appointed until elections were held in May 1995 when (Albert) 'Jack' Marks became the first Mayor of what was then the Town of Vincent. Vincent has had six subsequent Mayors (John Hyde; Nick Catania; Alannah MacTiernan; John Carey and Emma Cole). Since 1995, the Vincent population has grown by 40 percent from approximately 25,000 to 36,000 residents, becoming the 'City of Vincent' in 2011.

Over the last quarter century: 20 million people have walked through the gates of Beatty Park Leisure Centre; \$440M in rates has been paid; over 200,000 tonnes of waste has been collected; 4 million books have been loaned from the Vincent Library; \$65 million has been collected in parking revenue from 50,000 parking infringements; almost 13,000 planning applications have been processed and 14,000 building licences issued. West Perth resident Marie Slyth was at the first Vincent council meeting in 1995.

She was the first member of the public to address the Council, and still attends council meetings twenty five years later to the day.

Many staff have come and gone over the last twenty five years. A small but stoic group of 'lifers' remain employed by the City. These are:

- Elizabeth Bentley (Beatty Park);
- Peter Cicanese (Rangers Prosecutions & Strategy);
- Metodija Dimceski (Waste & Recycling);
- Blagoja Duranski (Waste & Recycling);
- Ian Ellies (Parks & Urban Green);
- Vince Giustiniano (Engineering);
- Cheryl Gregory (Library);
- Dale Morrissy (Beatty Park);
- Quoc Nguyen (Parks & Urban Green);
- Louise Scott (Beatty Park);
- Graeme Springett (Parks & Urban Green);
- Milko Stojanoski (Engineering);
- Steven Terpkos (Waste & Recycling);
- Jeremy Van den Bok (Parks & Urban Green).

Peter Cicanese shared some of his early memories of Vincent with us.

"I was originally a Ranger Patrol Officer with the City of Perth. When we split from the City of Perth in 1994, we were located in Westralia Square in the City where the Towns of Cambridge, Shepparton, (later renamed Victoria Park) and Vincent, had temporarily set up offices. In early 1995 the Town of Vincent moved new staff to the grandstand of Leederville Oval where the Managers and Directors were situated the top floor and the other staff on the lower ground floor. This is now the East Perth Football Club offices. We were at the Leederville Oval grandstand whilst land was being cleared on the corner of Vincent Street and Loftus Street ready for the construction of the new Town of Vincent building. When the building was completed we moved in and the rest is history. The building was unique when completed and often referred to as the 'Starship Enterprise.'

During 1995 it was a tedious and slow process to get all the logistics in place with the forming of a new local government and there were several teething problems. My fondest memories are that we were a close knit bunch so it was easier to communicate and socialise in a smaller workplace environment. We had all been through a somewhat anxious time as a result of the split up and there had been a lot of concern as to job security, so this was a step forward.



Peter Cicanese 1994

In recent years the City campaigned vigorously against the State Governments move to amalgamate local governments and the end result was we are still here bigger and better than ever!

My only sadness is that I have met so many colleagues over the years, only to see them move on and never heard of again, several have also passed away during their time at Vincent." (Peter Cicanese)

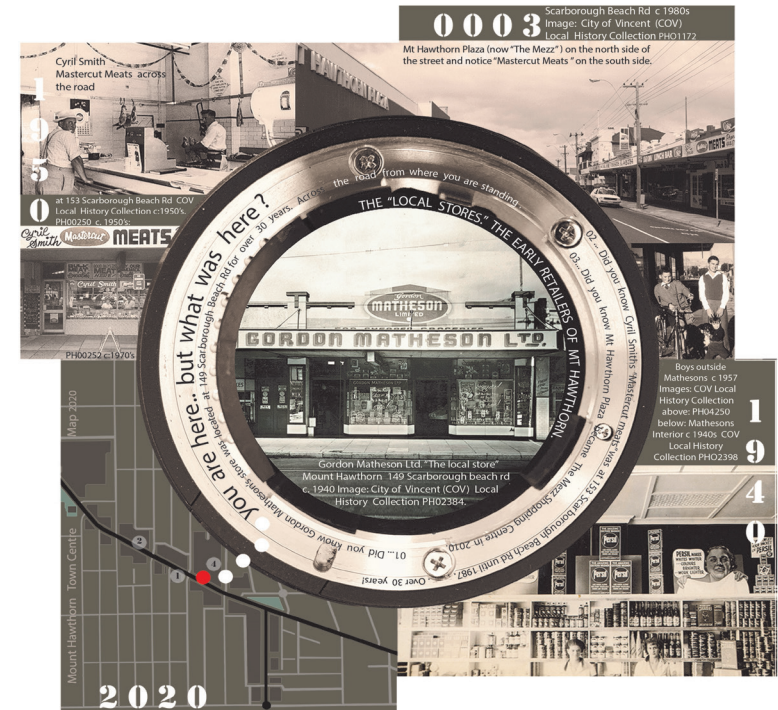


Town of Vincent temporary offices at Leederville Oval, 1995 with former Vincent Senior Managers l-r: Vernon McKay; Juan Pradera; John Giorgi and Rob Boardman. (Guardian Express, May 1995).

MOUNT HAWTHORN HERITAGE TRAIL

The Mount Hawthorn Hub Town Team has developed two new heritage plaques that help locals explore the history of Mount Hawthorn. The Hub is a community organisation that brings together residents and businesses who want to maintain the unique identity of Mount Hawthorn. The group began developing the Heritage Trail Plaque Project in 2019 in collaboration with the City of Vincent with the aim of connecting contemporary residents and visitors to Mount Hawthorn with

the history of the area. Two new plaques to be unveiled in August 2020 join the two existing markers in parkettes outside Lawley's and Leaf & Bean cafés along Scarborough Beach Road. The new plaques will be located across the road from Diabolik Books (formerly Gordon Matheson Grocers), and at the Mezz Shopping Centre (formerly John Allans department store). The plaques were developed by local architect, artist and Mount Hawthorn resident Caroline Di Costa.



VINCENT HERITAGE HERO

MARIE SLYTH

Local resident Marie Slyth has been a staunch advocate for heritage of the Cleaver Street precinct area of West Perth where she has lived much of her life. Born in 1938, Marie grew up on Strathcona Street back in the days when night carts clattered the streets and air raid shelters and sirens were a normal occurrence during the tense years of WWII. Marie was a student at St Brigid's High School on John Street Northbridge, and then attended night school at Perth Tech (the old Perth Boys School on St George's Terrace). As a young woman, Marie remembers watching baseball games at Beatty Park Reserve (prior to construction of the pool), playing on the swings and maypole at the former children's playground at Robertson Park and going to dances at the Embassy Ballroom in the City (memorably getting a ride home one night on the back of a motorcycle with local footballer Polly Farmer).



Portrait of Marie Slyth, 1956. PH0713

Marie had a long and varied career that saw her working everywhere from the ABC in Perth to the West Australian Agent General's Office in London in the days when



Marie Slyth, 1930s. PH0703



Marie Slyth at the official opening of the Vincent Administration & Civic Centre, April 1996.



Marie Slyth in 2020.

Charles Court (then the WA Minister for Industrial Development) was wooing British mining companies and investors to develop the iron ore industry in the Pilbara. Marie travelled extensively through Europe and North America (an original backpacker!) before returning to Australia and working in the American Consular offices in Sydney for many years. It was in Sydney where she learned about the local government precinct system for heritage protection, a model for which she advocated after returning to Perth in the 1990s. In the newly formed Vincent, Marie was instrumental in setting up the Cleaver Precinct History/Heritage group to

protect the heritage of the area. She developed and led heritage walks in the area and published a book, *A Heritage Walk: Cleaver Precinct West Perth* (2013). Marie has also been an engaged and active Vincent resident for the last twenty five years.

Marie has been a tireless supporter of the Local History Centre, contributing her knowledge and photos to the Vincent Local History Collection. Her oral history and stories are available via the Library catalogue, and her life in pictures is available via the Local History Centre image library at:

cityofvincent.imagegallery.me/

WHAT'S NEW IN THE LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION?

RETROMAPS

The State Records Office has officially launched 'Retromaps', an online resource which allows users to explore how Perth's properties and streets have changed over the last century.

Retromaps is based on historical plans prepared from original surveys of the Perth area carried out by the Metropolitan Water Works Board (and subsequent departments), commencing in the early 1900s.

The plans were used as part of the installation of a sewerage scheme throughout the metropolitan area during the 20th Century and are commonly known as "Sewerage Plans".

Previously, the plans were available for use in the State Records Office or via public libraries including the City of Vincent Local History Centre. The hardcopy plans were digitised in 2016 and a team of volunteers helped geo-reference them to make them searchable by location.

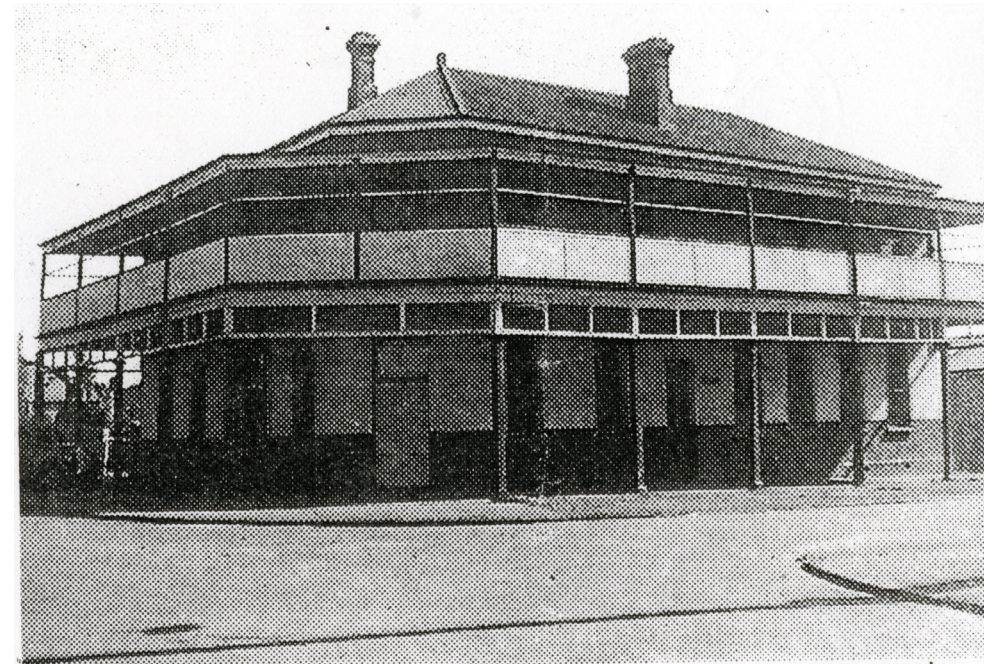
Retromaps makes it easier for anyone interested in the history of their property or street to access the information. You simply enter an address and you can then browse and download the historic plan of the area. These plans include valuable information such as original street names and numbers and building materials or types of structures.

The plans are available at:
mapping.sro.wa.gov.au/#/

If you'd like assistance using Retromaps, or help with your house history please contact the Local History Centre to arrange an in person or online appointment.



CAN YOU HELP?



The former Golden Age Post-Polio Centre For Children in Leederville.

The only images we have of the former Golden Age Polio rehabilitation centre which stood on the corner of Alfred and Harrogate Streets Leederville, is this grainy newspaper clipping. Anyone with photographs of the Golden Age

please get in touch. We and our colleagues at the Cambridge Library would love a good quality photograph of the building either in its life as a pub, polio convalescence centre or teacher training centre.



CITY OF VINCENT

LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS 2020

Capture Vincent's history in words or pictures
Cash prizes for best photographs and written entries
Entries close **September 30, 2020**
Enter online at: library.vincent.wa.gov.au/local-history-centre.aspx
For more details contact the Local History Centre on **9273 6534** or email local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au.

Sponsored by

SPONSORED BY

EDISON
PROPERTY

Claude Iaconi
"Local and Proud"

0412 427 488 | claude@edisonproperty.com.au



Follow the City of Vincent Library on Facebook

Local History Centre

www.library.vincent.wa.gov.au

Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au

Phone: 9273 6090

Address: 99 Loftus Street, Leederville, Western Australia, 6007

f @vincentlibrary **📷** @cityofvincentlibrary **👤** @CityofVincent



CITY OF VINCENT

