

The Fitzroy History Society Inc. Newsletter

May 2003

Heritage Shop Fittings and Shop Windows made here in Fitzroy

On Sunday 5 April 2003, we visited 51-57 Gertrude Street where Economic Industries manufactures heritage show cases, shop windows and shop fittings.

Steve Healy said his grandfather started the factory in the 1930s. There have been various name changes since that time. The first workshop was started at no. 51, a former furniture workshop. They then expanded to include number 53, Virgona's Wine Shop, and the corner shop. They have a large area of land at Laverton where structural steel work is done and where they store the Moomba equipment

At one stage they had their own electro-plating machinery and their own foundry. They now have a huge customer base. 99% of jobs are made to order or commissioned work such as taps for a hotel project. It is a small family business employing nine people. They have developed a range of skills. They employ apprentices and employed the first female cabinet-maker in Victoria.

The brass, copper and gilded mouldings used are made there by applying the metal veneer over a wooden base. The gilding metal used is imported from Spain and the copper is Australian, but some of it is sent overseas to be rolled.

Period restoration projects include

- Lyric House, 250 Collins Street, with curved windows and special lead-filled moulded brass fittings;
- the Athenaeum Theatre, and the Princess Theatre where the verandah has special brass decorative fittings;
- Block Arcade, and Royal Arcade where 22 shop fronts are presently being rebuilt in their original heritage form

General commercial and retail works include

- display baskets and drawers, fittings for chemist shops, kitchens, wine racks, table bases, mirror frames etc
- Myer Grace Bros. in Sydney, and Dimmey's in Swan Street with its very long piece of extruded brass moulding.

Unusual projects, recent and past, included all facilities each year for the Moomba river events, leadlighting and stained glass work, the Presidential Palace Singapore with bullet-proof roof, semi-trailer accessories, hub caps for Yellow Cabs and tooling for Canberra bombers

Across a laneway at the rear, in a former warehouse facing Marion Street, their workshop occupied the former storage site of Virgona's wines from the 1920s. And some of the original facilities for handling the barrels still remain.

Mary Lewis

Life in Fitzroy in 1875 (from the Collingwood Fitzroy Mercury of Saturday, 26 June 1875)

At the Fitzroy Court House last Monday Mr Hyam Hatt, clerk to the town council, informed the bench that considerable damage was done by stray goats and wandering cows within the municipal boundaries and he would ask their worships to supplement all fines in such cases with ample costs as the council had to employ two men for the express purposes of repairing the damages so incurred.

In the same edition a correspondent reported:

The sparrows are beginning to build and if no steps are taken to destroy them in the next two months it will be good bye to the fruit gardens in the suburbs. An old vineyard in prime condition is threatened after this year to be destroyed, to prevent the annoyance caused by the sparrows. The mayor would confer a great boon on many a poor cottage by calling a meeting to consider the damage the pests are causing.

thanks to FHS member Barbara Stroud of Wagga Wagga for this contribution

A Date for your diary

Wednesday, 13 August 2003

Annual General Meeting

Was their Labour in Vain? Fitzroy's Female Publicans

On the evening of Wednesday 7 May, as we sat in the hospitable surroundings of the Old Colonial Inn, Clare Wright led us on an imaginary pub crawl around late 19th century Fitzroy, where we would have been more than likely to stop for refreshment at pubs run by women. In the late 19th and early 20th century, Clare told us, hotelkeeping in Victoria was decidedly 'a girls' club'. By 1906, over 50% of Melbourne's hotels were licensed to women.

Clare's PhD thesis tracked the numbers and fortunes of Victoria's female publicans from 1875 to 1945, and asked questions about why women made inroads into this industry and what attracted them to hotelkeeping. Her research took her to the state Public Record Office, where she pored over licensing registers. She also consulted licensing laws, which from the earliest times gave women in Victoria the right to hold hotel licences. Alongside the documentary sources, Clare recorded oral history interviews with women who had run pubs for up to 60 years, and others such as family members who remembered the hotel life.

Clare traced a complex interplay between the liquor industry, licensing laws, property and class interests. She suggested that women were well placed to take up hotelkeeping opportunities during a period when respectability and domesticity were valued in the industry and licences were issued to people who were likely to be able to 'keep an orderly house'. This was a time when hotels were obliged to maintain rooms for

guests and licensees had to live on the premises. For women with families, this meant that they could have their children with them, and there were staff around to help keep an eye on the kids.

While some women found they were unsuited to the life, others thrived and saw it as an independent career, at a time when options for women to earn an income were limited. Many also felt a sense of responsibility, for their clientele and the wider community. Some female publicans were known to their regulars by terms of respect and affection such as 'Ma' or 'Gran', a tradition that continues to this day. The hotel in the 19th and early 20th century was often the place for community meetings - Clare pointed out that our Fitzroy History Society meeting was in keeping with this historical practice - and was a central part of community life in a whole variety of ways.

And the other reason given by Clare and her sources for the success of female publicans? They ran hotels because they were good at it.

Thank you to Clare for an illuminating talk followed by extensive discussion. Look out for her book *Beyond the Ladies Lounge: The Intoxicating History of Australia's Female Publicans*, to be published by Melbourne University Press in October. We will keep you posted.

Heather McRae

From our New York correspondent

Former FHS convenor, Meg Lee, recently sent us a postcard with her good wishes to us all. After almost two years there, she finds it a city of great contrasts, haves and havenots, ugly and beautiful, multicultural, . . .

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Committee contacts — 2002/03

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Learn to research your family history at the Fitzroy Library

On the evening of Wednesday 25th June, Anne Dixon, an experienced family history research and tutor at the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies (AIGS), will present a talk about how to start researching your family history. Areas she will cover include, getting organised, talking to relatives and accessing local resources.

Venue: Fitzroy Library, 128 Moor Street, Fitzroy

Time : 6.30pm, 25 June

All Welcome.

Subscriptions and Insurance

Check your address label to be sure your subscription is paid for 2003. If unpaid, please renew. Send your subscription to The Treasurer, Fitzroy History Society, P.O. Box 180, Fitzroy, 3065. The present low rate of \$5, together with other small income, just covers our low operating costs. The Fitzroy History Society is an incorporated body to protect the legal liability of our volunteers. Your committee has decided not to take out insurance for Personal Accident & Public Liability. Such insurance costs \$7.50 per member this year, probably rising next year to \$10 per member

FITZROY HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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A Night of Films, Wine and Cheese **Thursday, 12 June 2003, at 7pm**
 Admission, wine & cheese \$12.50

In 1908, the Fitzroy Cyclorama was billed as the Palace of Pictures, with 3000 seats at sixpence each. In 1964, the Regent Picture Theatre in Johnston Street was demolished. Let's resurrect the tradition, and see some films on Fitzroy as it was in decades past.

"Beautiful Melbourne" was made in 1847 and shot mainly in Fitzroy. Produced by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the film was part of a campaign by Fr. Gerard Tucker to educate people about "slums" of inner Melbourne. The film is silent and was originally shown with a presenter providing statistics and anecdotes.

"Living in Fitzroy" was made in 1985-86 by June Senyard and Stuart Miller. Through interviews with a range of Fitzroy and ex-Fitzroy residents, it offers a diversity of experiences of what it has meant to live in Fitzroy.

Bring and share any other films of the life and history of Fitzroy. (VHS format facilities available)

Our theatre is at Dante's Restaurant private function room, on the corner of Gertrude and Napier Streets.

RSVP by Monday, 9 June (for seating and catering purposes) to Shelley Young-Coyle, 9417 2939, If you can bring any Fitzroy films, please call John Senyard on 9417 2839..

Walking Fitzroy, a Living Museum **Sunday, 13 July 2003, at 10.30am**
 Admission \$5

Fitzroy abounds with relics of life from 50, 100, 150 years ago. And we take it too much for granted. As a use for the restored Fitzroy Town Hall, we are exploring the concept of a 'living museum' The Museum of Victoria is planning to develop its Australian Societies theme in its surrounding neighbourhood, and we intend to cooperate with them on that initiative.

Join us at the Melbourne Museum main entrance as we set off to explore Fitzroy as a "living museum"

- Some themes that we can explore along the walk would be:
- Federation, and the homesites of Alfred Deakin, Senator Robert Best, George Upward (Usher of the Black Rod);
 - Aboriginal Fitzroy, Pastor Doug Nicholls' mission in Gore Street, the health service in Gertrude Street;
 - Social Issues, the 8 hours movement, the James Street evictions of 1933, a maternity home, a babies home;
 - Laneways, stables, dunnies, and a governor of Pentridge;
 - Artists of Fitzroy, Chevalier, Calvert, Buvelot, Vassilieff, Boyd;
 - Housing, mansions, boarding houses, workers' cottages
 - Health & Death, vaccinations, dispensaries, hospitals, and funeral parlours;
 - Civic Centre, town hall, library, court house,
 - Immigration, Early Schooling, Original Churches, 19th century Shopping, etc., etc.

We plan to finish at the restored and reopened sections of the Fitzroy Town Hall (due for completion in June).

Do you know of any interesting sites or themes to include in our walk ? Help us to plan the walk by indicating your areas of interest. If so, please contact Mike Moore (9416 1446), or John Senyard (9417 2839).

Fitzroy History Society Membership Renewal / Membership Application

Name(s)	Telephone		
.....		
Address	E-mail		
.....		
.....	Subscription	Cash	Cheque
	\$5 per person, per year		

Please forward your Comments, Feedback, Suggestions for future activities