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**RESILIENCE AND FORTITUDE:
THE LIVES OF IMPOVERISHED WOMEN IN
FREMANTLE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA,
1890–1914**

Linda McGowan

Bachelor of Business and Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies

**Submitted in partial fulfilment for the
Master of Philosophy**



School of Arts and Sciences

Fremantle Campus

August 2022

Declaration of Authorship

I declare that this Research Project is my own and contains work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Linda McGowan

August 2022

Abstract

Many impoverished women struggled to raise their children without support in Fremantle, Western Australia, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This thesis investigates how these women managed to provide for their children, and keep their families together, at a time when society expected women to be supported by men. The appalling living conditions in the slum areas of Fremantle, which often led to serious health issues that further impacted on women's struggle for survival, are explored as well as how the denial of legal rights, and harsh community attitudes towards these women, exacerbated already difficult situations. Options such as institutional homes that were available to assist impoverished women and children are also investigated. However, there was a strong stigma in applying to these institutions and women feared being separated from their children. Using primary historical records in Western Australia at the State Library and the State Records Office as well as information from websites such as Ancestry and Trove, census data and personal collections, this thesis focuses on the lives of four impoverished women as examples of the way that women survived. The most common way that impoverished women managed economically at that time was cleaning houses or offices, doing washing or working as a domestic servant, and three of the four women made their living this way. Impoverished women often assisted each other by sharing child-minding and providing limited accommodation. Scant information in the secondary literature exists on how unsupported, impoverished women and their children survived in Fremantle from 1890-1914. Thus, this thesis explores an under-researched part of Fremantle's history and contributes new knowledge regarding impoverished women's lives in Western Australia.

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I acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the traditional custodians of the land on which this research was conducted. I also pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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¹ <https://www.nla.gov.au/using-library/copyright-library-collections/rights-and-pictures-collection>

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Introduction

*Women have always been an equal part of the past, just not an equal part of history.*²

Amy Ingram lived a life similar to that of many impoverished women struggling to support a family alone in Fremantle, Western Australia, in the early twentieth century. She had moved to Fremantle in 1896 with Henry, whom she had met while living in Narrogin with her family. As the only unmarried daughter in the family, Amy may have felt that at twenty-five, her chance of marriage and motherhood was passing her by. However, her family strongly disapproved of her relationship with Henry, who was also twenty-one years older than Amy, so they had left Narrogin and moved to Fremantle to start a new life together. She had four children with Henry but just after the youngest was born, Henry deserted her and Amy was left to struggle alone to support her children without financial support.

Amy had already been helping to support her family by cleaning houses and taking in washing. Now, deserted with such young children, there was little chance of obtaining any other type of employment. She took on even more work, at first taking the baby with her, and later relying on her children to care for the infant while she worked. She knew that she would receive no assistance from her family as they had disowned her because of her unmarried relationship. After struggling in poverty for six years, Amy finally had to accept a live-in position as a housekeeper in a rural area that allowed her to take her three youngest children with her. She eventually married her employer, giving her new-found social respectability. The expanded family later returned to live in Fremantle where Amy still had a wide circle of friends.³

Amy was a proud woman who was determined to support her family without having to apply for assistance from the few support services available to women in her situation. There was a strong stigma in applying for entry to any of the assistance homes, especially the Poor House. Mothers also feared forced separation from their children, with families being broken up. Women generally only applied for assistance when all other options had been

² Gloria Steinem, *The Truth Will Set You Free, But First It Will Piss You Off! Thoughts on Life, Love, and Rebellion* (Sydney: Murdoch Books, 2019), 103.

³ Amelia de Burgh, "Riding Through Life. Reminiscences by Amelia (Millie) de Burgh," 1990, Unpublished personal memoirs written for her family, typescript. The intended audience was her immediate family and only the first chapter related to her growing up in Fremantle..

exhausted. However, many single mothers had no alternatives but to seek state or charitable assistance to feed their children. Admittance records of these institutions note that many of the women applying appeared malnourished as they were giving what little food they had to their children.⁴

Amy Ingram was my great-grandmother, and her daughter (my great-aunt Amelia) wrote her memoirs in her later years which include a chapter that describes growing up in Fremantle with her family. This thesis discusses impoverished women like Amy and how they struggled to raise their families in Fremantle during this period.

This thesis focusses on Fremantle, a port town that experienced many of the problems of port towns around the world and had a diverse working-class population.⁵ Fremantle and Perth were distinct socially and culturally from each other and there was only a very basic road linking the two towns until the 1930s.⁶ While there is some comparison with Perth included, they were two distinct towns.

Background

Originally established in 1829 as a coastal town for the Swan River Colony, Fremantle developed as a shipping and trade centre during the nineteenth century and became Western Australia's main port with the opening of the Inner Harbour in 1897.⁷ However, like many seaports across the world in the late nineteenth century, Fremantle had an unsavoury reputation as a place of criminal behaviour and drunkenness.⁸

By the 1890s, it was a thriving town whose population almost tripled from 7,077 in 1891 to 20,444 in 1901.⁹ With a convict presence since 1850, local newspaper articles regularly referred to Fremantle's criminal classes and their disreputable activities.

⁴ Bruce Scates, "'Knocking out a Living': Survival Strategies and Popular Protest in the 1890s Depression," in *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, eds. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, and Susan Sheridan (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 43.

⁵ Geoffrey Bolton, *Land of Vision and Mirage, Western Australia since 1826* (Crawley: UWA Press, 2008), 69.

⁶ Bolton, *Land of Vision and Mirage*. 69.

⁷ Fremantle derived its name from Captain Charles Fremantle, Master of the *H. M. S. Challenger* which anchored off Garden Island on 25 April, 1829. Captain Fremantle landed on Arthurs Head and on 2 May, 1829, he took formal possession in the name of King George IV.

⁸ Michelle McKeough, "A Council & Its Crises: Challenge and Response in Fremantle's Community During Three Times of Crisis - the Bubonic Plague the Great War the Depression Era" (PhD diss., Murdoch University, 2016), 19.

⁹ J. K. Hitchcock, *History of Fremantle: The Front Gate of Australia, 1829–1929* (Fremantle: The S. H. Lamb Printing House, 1929), 79; Western Australian census, April 10, 1891.

Furthermore, its 'West End' became infamous as a place of disease and unsanitary living conditions, with frequent outbreaks of typhoid, dysentery and smallpox and annual outbreaks of bubonic plague from 1900 to 1906.¹⁰

For many in the town, it was also a period of economic hardship and great social upheaval. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many Fremantle residents struggled to earn a living by doing whatever work they could find, often odd jobs such as cleaning, menial factory tasks and warehouse and service work.¹¹ The economic boom that attracted so many workers from the eastern Australian colonies began to recede in 1897, and by early 1898 there were many unemployed. The town's economic woes worsened when the railway workshops were moved to Midland in 1904.¹² The recessions of 1897-1898 and 1908-1910 hit the poor the hardest.¹³

Persistent poverty and long-term unemployment marginalised the people of Fremantle, with women and children suffering severely.¹⁴ The most in need were deserted women with children, the elderly who had no relatives to support them, and those who were chronically sick or insane. Poverty was often determined by gender, with women seen as dependent on male partners or relatives.¹⁵ Nineteenth-century colonial social attitudes towards the destitute were often discriminatory and unforgiving towards women, especially unmarried mothers and others who did not conform to society expectations and who were typically considered the 'undeserving poor'.¹⁶

¹⁰ Michelle McKeough, "Caught in an International Crisis: How Fremantle Fell Victim to Bubonic Plague 1900 to 1906," *The Great Circle* 40, no. 1 (2018): 3, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26783778>.

¹¹ Leigh Straw, "'The Worst Female Character': Criminal Underclass Women in Perth and Fremantle, 1900–1939," *Journal of Australian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2013): 211, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2013.782061>.

¹² Bob Reece, "Glimpses of Fremantle 1829–1929," in *Voices from the West End: Stories, People and Events that Shaped Fremantle*, eds. Paul Longley Arthur and Geoffrey Bolton (Welshpool: Western Australian Museum, 2012), 45.

¹³ Tom Stannage, *The People of Perth: A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City* (Perth: Perth City Council, 1979), 268.

¹⁴ Straw, "'The Worst Female Character'," 211.

¹⁵ Penelope Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses in Western Australia, 1829 to 1910* (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2009), 16.

¹⁶ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 16. The 1834 English Poor Law distinguished between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving poor', with the "deserving" considered to be poor through no fault of their own where the "undeserving poor" were lazy and unwilling to work. [Golightley](#), Malcolm, & [Holloway](#), Margaret. "Editorial". *The British Journal of Social Work*, Volume 46, Issue 1, January 2016, Pages 1–7 <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcw001>

Life was very difficult for the poor and, in particular, single and deserted women with young children. This research was motivated by the story of my great-grandmother Amy Ingram who was an unmarried mother in Fremantle at the turn of the twentieth century and who struggled in poverty to raise her four children. Amy's story is indicative of the experiences of other impoverished women with children in Fremantle at the time. This thesis examines the lives of impoverished women in Fremantle from 1890-1914 by investigating their circumstances and living conditions. It also evaluates what assistance was available to them. The findings illuminate an under-researched part of Fremantle's history, contributing new knowledge about impoverished women's lives during the dramatic years of Western Australian history from the 1890 gold rush to the advent of the First World War.

Research Question and Aims

This thesis seeks to address the following research question: How did unsupported women survive and support their children in Fremantle from 1890 to 1914? This research question was answered by addressing four related aims that assessed the spatial and social context in Fremantle during this period, explored ways that unsupported women sustained themselves and examined options for assistance such as institutional homes. These four aims were to:

- Assess living conditions in Fremantle from 1890 to 1914, with particular attention to the poor, especially unsupported women and their children;
- Analyse the legal status and social expectations of women and how they were viewed by Fremantle society at this time;
- Discuss how unsupported women (they could be single mothers, deserted wives or widows) sustained themselves in Fremantle 1890 to 1914; and
- Investigate the types of assistance available to impoverished Fremantle women at the time.

Research Methods

This research has been carried out using historical research resources from the State Library of Western Australia, State Records Office of Western Australia, Fremantle History Collection, *Trove* records from the National Library of Australia (<https://trove.nla.gov.au>), census records, records of births, deaths and marriages from several countries, on-line

ancestry search engines (e.g. *Ancestry*, <https://www.ancestry.com.au>), personal family historical records and secondary sources such as books and peer-reviewed journal articles.

During the time period considered in this research, impoverished women rarely had the resources or time to keep diaries, and there are no known personal diaries of the four women discussed in this thesis. However Amy Ingram, my great-grandmother, is one of the four women investigated and the Ingram family lodged with Lucy Bant, another woman discussed in this thesis, and who is also mentioned in Amelia's memoirs. The third woman described in this thesis is Kate Hainey, a blind woman who lived in Fremantle and would have been incapable of reading or writing because of her affliction. However, as she was a well-known character in Fremantle at the time, there are many instances where she is mentioned in local newspapers, and her story has been developed from these sources. The fourth woman in this thesis is Emily Peacock, an assisted emigrant who worked as a domestic servant in Fremantle when she first arrived in Western Australia. Her story has been developed from sources such as *Ancestry*, *Trove* and some secondary records.

Because of the nature of the primary sources used in this study, as in much social history research, the stories of these women have been necessarily pieced together from fragmented sources to attempt to understand their lives. This was especially the case in collating the story of Kate Hainey from local newspaper articles.

As this research is an historical study of living conditions and social attitudes in a period before quantitative methods were applied to such questions, qualitative research methods have been used. However, some quantitative data have been included.

Research findings were evaluated from a feminist theory perspective. This theory observes gender and class in relation to power, in both everyday interactions and social structures. Feminist theory uses the conflict approach to examine the reinforcement of gender roles and inequalities, highlighting the role of patriarchy in maintaining the oppression of women.¹⁷

¹⁷ "Reading: Feminist Theory," Lumen Sociology, Module 1: Foundations of Sociology, accessed September 25, 2021, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/alamo-sociology/chapter/reading-feminist-theory>.

In Australia during 1890 to 1914, gender stratification meant that women were generally regarded as inferior to men and had very few legal rights.¹⁸ They were often treated as second-class citizens, which impacted substantially on their lives.¹⁹ This aspect and how it contributed to the struggle of impoverished women in Fremantle from 1890 to 1914 is a theme in this thesis. Feminist theory is used in discussing the lack of legal rights of women (and consequently their lack of power), the employment options available where women generally earned only half that of men, and in community attitudes towards impoverished women and especially single mothers. The stories of the four women described above represent the typical lives of many women in Fremantle at this time. While the focus of this thesis is 1890 to 1914, in some cases the following years have been discussed to add depth to the women's stories.

Literature Review

The stories of people, especially women, living in poor or marginalised communities are rarely told and many may be in danger of being forgotten.²⁰ In the 1960s, the field of social history emerged, where the lived experience of people is considered. Also emerging was women's history, a field that considers how historical events impacted women and that introduces gender as a frame in which we can interpret and understand historical events and periods. History has often ignored the important contribution of women. Documenting the experiences of everyday women who struggled to raise their families in the period 1890 to 1914 helps explain how Fremantle evolved into the community of today.

Western Australian historians generally ignored the stories of women and children in the community until well into the second half of the twentieth century. Almost every history published before 1960 concerned male activities from which women and children were omitted. There were only two Western Australian women's histories from the nineteenth century, both written by fairly wealthy women. In 1871, Mrs. Edward Millett wrote *An Australian Parsonage; or, the Settler and the Savage in Western Australia* about her personal reminiscences and based on a journal that she kept during her voyage to Western Australia. In

¹⁸ Rae Lesser Blumberg, "A General Theory of Gender Stratification," *Sociological Theory* 2 (1984): 23, <https://doi.org/10.2307/223343>.

¹⁹ "Women's Suffrage," National Museum Australia, accessed May 22, 2020, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/womens-suffrage>.

²⁰ Paul Stanistreet, "Why Social History Matters," *The Learning Age*, posted January 10, 2013, <https://thelearningage.wordpress.com/2013/01/10/why-social-history-matters>.

1885, Lady Mary Anne Barker (wife of Governor Broome) wrote *Letters to Guy*, describing her travels to Western Australia.²¹ Both these texts described women's roles in the early years of the Colony, and both were re-published in facsimile in the second half of the twentieth century when historians began to record women's activities, rescuing them from obscurity.

The only histories of Western Australian women and children published from 1900 to 1960 appear in *Early Days*, the journal of the Western Australian Historical Society. These articles are mainly based on women's diaries and reminiscences, and almost all of them are written by men concerning women acknowledged as early pioneers.²² Nowadays, most historians recognize that the history of women is crucially important for the understanding of any society.

It is difficult to identify the extent of poverty in Western Australia's past, and histories of poor women have been even more elusive.²³ *The Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia* states that poverty has been a persistent feature of Western Australian society since the beginning of European colonisation.²⁴ However, the existence of poverty was widely denied in the early literature. J. S. Battye's major work *Western Australia: A History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth*, covering nearly a century of Western Australia history, contains nothing on poverty.²⁵ Hal Colebatch's *A Story of a Hundred Years* describes the State as 'the home of a happy and prosperous people'.²⁶ In 1960, F. K. Crowley wrote *Australia's Western Third: A History of Western Australia from the First Settlements to Modern Times* and generally agreed with Battye and Colebatch regarding the community being successful.²⁷ Although his book discussed unemployment during the Depression in the 1930s, there is little on working people's experiences with poverty. J. K. Hitchcock, described by Bob Reece as Fremantle's first historian, wrote

²¹ Mrs. Edward Millett, *An Australian Parsonage; or, the Settler and the Savage in Western Australia* (London: Edward Stanford, 1872); Lady Mary Anne Barker, *Letters to Guy* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1885).

²² Penelope Hetherington, "Women and Children as Subjects in Western Australian History," in *Women and Citizenship: Suffrage Centenary*, eds. Patricia Crawford and Judy Skene (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 1999), 212.

²³ Stephen Garton, *Out of Luck: Poor Australians and Social Welfare, 1788–1988* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

²⁴ Joseph Christensen, "Poverty" in *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia* Jenny Gregory and Jan Gothard, eds. a, (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2009), 718.

²⁵ J. S. Battye, *Western Australia: A History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

²⁶ Hal Colebatch, *A Story of a Hundred Years: Western Australia, 1829–1929* (Perth: Government Printer, 1929).

²⁷ F. K. Crowley, *Australia's Western Third: A History of Western Australia from the First Settlements to Modern Times* (London: Macmillan, 1960).

History of Fremantle: The Front Gate of Australia, 1829-1929 which covers the port's first hundred years after British settlement but does not discuss poverty.²⁸ Geoffrey Bolton's 1972 book *A Fine Country to Starve In* is an excellent publication on the impact of the Great Depression years of 1929-1933 on Perth and Western Australia but mainly deals with male unemployment and does not discuss the earlier period covered by this thesis.²⁹

Other histories such as *Voices from the West End: Stories, People and Events that Shaped Fremantle*, a collection of stories about people and events in Fremantle, and *Fremantle Impressions* by Ron Davidson that discusses Fremantle's origins, history, culture and heritage, also never mention poverty.³⁰ Despite debate in the academic literature regarding the existence of poverty in Western Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there is ample evidence that poverty was a major issue during this period.³¹ However, Batty, Colebatch, Crowley, Hitchcock and Davidson all overlook the importance of poverty in their writings, and Bolton only covers it in relation to the later Great Depression years.

It is remarkable that, in recent years, nearly every writer focussing on social history and the effects of poverty and community attitudes on women and their families have been women. Penelope Hetherington, Kellie Abbott and Celia Chesney wrote on poor relief during the early twentieth century in Western Australia, and Amanda Gardiner documented community attitudes towards unmarried mothers and the resulting issue of infanticide.³² Other useful texts with a wider Australian focus are by Caroline Ingram who explores infanticide and the law, Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe on community attitudes towards single mothers and their children, and Christina Twomey about wife desertion and colonial

²⁸ Bob Reece, "Fremantle's First Historian: Joseph Keane Hitchcock," *Fremantle Studies* 7 (2012); 33–50; Hitchcock, *History of Fremantle*.

²⁹ Geoffrey C. Bolton, *A Fine Country to Starve In* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1972).

³⁰ Arthur, Paul Longley and Geoffrey Bolton, eds. *Voices from the West End: Stories, People and Events that Shaped Fremantle*. Welshpool: Western Australian Museum, 2012. Ron Davidson, *Fremantle Impressions* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2007).

³¹ Tom, Stannage. "Uncovering Poverty in Australian History", *Studies in Western Australian History*, 29 (2015): 55.

³² Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*; Kellie Abbott and Celia Chesney, "I am a Poor Woman': Gender, Poor Relief and the Poorhouse in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Western Australia," *Studies in Western Australian History*, 25 (2007), <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.944281124170563>; Amanda Gardiner, "It Is Almost as If There Were a Written Script: Child Murder, Concealment of Birth, and the Unmarried Mother in Western Australia," *M/C Journal* 17, no. 5 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.894>.

welfare, mainly in relation to the Victorian goldrush.³³ Anne O'Brien describes the complexity of the problem of poverty, the inequalities of society, women's lack of choices for economic survival and the role of poverty to the overall functioning of society in New South Wales.³⁴ However, there is a dearth of published information on impoverished women who endeavoured to raise their families in Fremantle without the support of a husband or family from the 1890s into the early twentieth century. Poverty has generally been ignored in Western Australian history, particularly the plight of impoverished women and children.

Information on disease in Western Australia at the time has been collated, again primarily by women. For example, Michelle McKeough examines health issues in Fremantle, discussing how the Fremantle Council responded to bubonic plague in 1900.³⁵ Vera Whittington, in her book *Gold and Typhoid: Two Fevers: A Social History of Western Australia, 1891-1900*, wrote about the typhoid crisis and how many cases were brought back from the goldfields by returning miners.³⁶

Women have also written the two main secondary sources that cover the Assisted Immigrant Domestic Servant Scheme: Rica Erickson's *The Bride Ships*, which focuses exclusively on the scheme in Western Australia and covers the period 1849 to 1889, and Jan Gothard's *Blue China*, which details the experiences of working-class women sent to Australia from the late 1850s to the end of the century.³⁷ A more recent book is *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s-1930* by Lisa Chilton which contrasts the Australian and Canadian programs for British migrant women from the 1860s through to 1930.³⁸

³³ Caroline Ingram, "'How Is This Not Murder?' Infanticide and the Law in Australian History," Australian Policy and History, published October 2, 2018, <https://aph.org.au/2018/10/how-is-this-not-murder-infanticide-and-the-law-in-australian-history/>; Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Christina Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute: Motherhood, Wife Desertion and Colonial Welfare* (Kew: Australian Scholarly Press, 2002).

³⁴ Anne O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison: The Poor in New South Wales 1880-1918* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1988).

³⁵ Michelle McKeough, "The Bubonic Plagues in Fremantle, 1900," *Fremantle Studies* 5 (2007): 22-29.

³⁶ Vera Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid: Two Fevers: A Social History of Western Australia, 1891-1900* (Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press, 1988).

³⁷ Rica Erickson, *The Bride Ships: Experiences of Immigrants Arriving in Western Australia 1849-1889* (Carlisle: Hesperian Press, 1992); Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

³⁸ Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

Chapter Outlines

Chapter One of this thesis describes living conditions in Fremantle from 1890 to 1914, particularly focussing on the slum areas of Fremantle in the West End, and compares these conditions with those of Perth. It discusses the contaminated water supply and lack of sanitation, and the ensuing health issues such as typhoid, plague and other diseases during this time. Conditions in the Fremantle Smelters' Camp at South Beach are also reviewed because many people who could not afford even the slum areas of the West End moved to the shanty town of the Smelters' Camp to survive.

Chapter Two outlines the place and status of women in Western Australian society, with a particular focus on impoverished Fremantle women. It discusses the legal position of women in Western Australian society, community views of the poor (including single mothers and deserted wives), and their employment options. This chapter also examines the Assisted Immigrant Domestic Servant scheme which brought large numbers of servants to Western Australia in the late nineteenth century and closes with a section about women who were forced to turn to crime due to the pressures of poverty.

Chapter Three outlines the various options, mainly in the wider Perth area, available to assist impoverished women and children during this period. At this time, destitute women had few options available to support them; this chapter describes orphanages, the Government Industrial School and Female Rescue Homes such as the Poor House.

Woven into Chapter Two are stories of four women that help tell how impoverished women lived and managed to survive in Fremantle during this time. The first is my great-grandmother Amy Ingram, who was the inspiration for this research. She struggled in poverty to raise her four children after being deserted by her partner in the early twentieth century. The second is Lucy Bant, a good friend of hers, and Amy and her children lived as lodgers with Lucy for many years. Although Lucy was married, her alcoholic husband did not support his family, and so Lucy needed to financially support herself and her children. The third, Kate Hainey, was a blind woman who eked out a life in Fremantle. At this time, there was little State support for people with disabilities and, even though Kate did not have children, life was even harder for her as a blind woman. Kate helped other destitute women by sometimes taking them and their often numerous children home to her small rented room when they had nowhere else to go. The fourth woman discussed is Emily Peacock who had come to Fremantle as part of the government-assisted immigrant domestic servant scheme

and in search of a better life. Instead, she found herself abandoned by her new husband soon after becoming pregnant. Emily eventually married a Chinese man, which was against all social conventions at that time, but this enabled her to survive with her young daughter.

All four of these women are good examples of how impoverished women survived in the early twentieth century and were also traceable. However, Amy's life would probably not have been able to be researched to the necessary degree if she had not been my ancestor and her story passed down through my family. The research in this thesis collates and evaluates the scant and scattered information on impoverished women's experiences and their place in Fremantle's social history. However, many gaps remain because women's stories and experiences have not previously been prioritised as being an important part of Fremantle's or the State's history.

Research Scope and Limitations

The years 1890 to 1914 were a significant period in Western Australian history, encompassing the gold rushes, economic depression and the onset of the First World War. During the gold rush years, many men who left their families to seek their fortune on the goldfields failed to return, and men's abandonment of their families emerged as a serious social problem.³⁹

There is little historical scholarship about how poor people, especially unsupported women, managed to survive during the early years of Fremantle as impoverished women's stories and experiences were rarely considered a significant part of our history. There is a sparsity of information about impoverished women at this time and there are many women whose lives remain unknown because they were too proud to apply for assistance and so are not documented in the records. Poor women rarely had the resources or time to keep diaries, and there are no known personal diaries of the four women discussed in this thesis. Because of this, the four stories are incomplete but have been constructed from the available resources.

³⁹ Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute*, xv.

Significance of the Research

Impoverished women have previously been overlooked in research and scholarship on Fremantle's history, particularly from 1890 to 1914 which were critical years encompassing the gold rushes, economic depression and the onset of the First World War. The results of this study are significant because they provide greater understanding of the experiences of impoverished women and their children, especially when considered from a feminist theoretical perspective. In particular, the stories of these four women enrich our knowledge of Fremantle's early social history at a time when living conditions were often harsh, options for State and charitable assistance for destitute women were few, and social attitudes to impoverished women were generally unforgiving.

Chapter One: Fremantle Living Conditions

“Beastly Backyards and Stinking Slums”

1

Introduction

This chapter details living conditions in Fremantle in the period from 1890 to 1914, particularly focussing on the slum areas in the West End, and compares the conditions with those of Perth. It discusses the lack of sanitation, contaminated water supply and ensuing health issues such as typhoid, bubonic plague and other diseases during this time, with the aim of contextualizing the living conditions of impoverished women in Fremantle during this period. Conditions in the Fremantle Smelters’ Camp are also described because many people who could not afford even the slum areas of the West End moved to the shanty town of the Smelters’ Camp to survive.

Sanitary Conditions

In May 1884, Dr. Alfred Waylen, the Colonial Surgeon of Western Australia, reported that Fremantle had the highest death rate in the country.² Dysentery, smallpox, typhoid, bubonic plague, whooping cough, scarlet fever and influenza all contributed to Fremantle’s mortality rate.³ In 1897, Dr. James Hope, the Principal Medical Officer of Fremantle Prison, and from 1909 the State’s first Commissioner of Public Health, reported an infant mortality rate of 183 out of 684 births, and that one in four children failed to reach twelve months of age.⁴ Despite the known health problems arising from poor sanitation, he claimed it was the fault of the mothers for not exercising proper standards of cleanliness.⁵

The West End of Fremantle is a collection of streets characterised by late Georgian and Victorian-style architecture at the south-eastern side of the port as shown in figure 1. It

¹ “Beastly Backyards and Stinking Slums,” *The Sunday Times*, February 1, 1903, 13, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/4238318>.

² Alfred Waylen, “Report by the Colonial Surgeon on Public Health for 1883,” *Western Australian Parliamentary Papers*, 1884, no. 9. Dr. Alfred Waylen was appointed Colonial Surgeon in August 1873, Medical Officer of Perth Prison in 1876, and was also President of the Medical Board and of the Central Board of Health. He was also notable as the Colony’s first locally born medical practitioner.

³ Waylen, “Report by the Colonial Surgeon on Public Health for 1883.”

⁴ Michelle McKeough, “A Twist in the Turn of the Century: The Bubonic Plague in Fremantle 1900,” in *Voices from the West End: Stories, People and Events that Shaped Fremantle*, eds. Paul Longley Arthur and Geoffrey Bolton (Perth: Western Australian Museum, 2012), 114.

⁵ McKeough, “A Twist in the Turn of the Century,” 114.

incorporates the Fremantle Prison, Esplanade Reserve, Bathers Bay, the majority of Fremantle’s historic and heritage-listed buildings, and now the Fremantle campus of Notre Dame University Australia.⁶

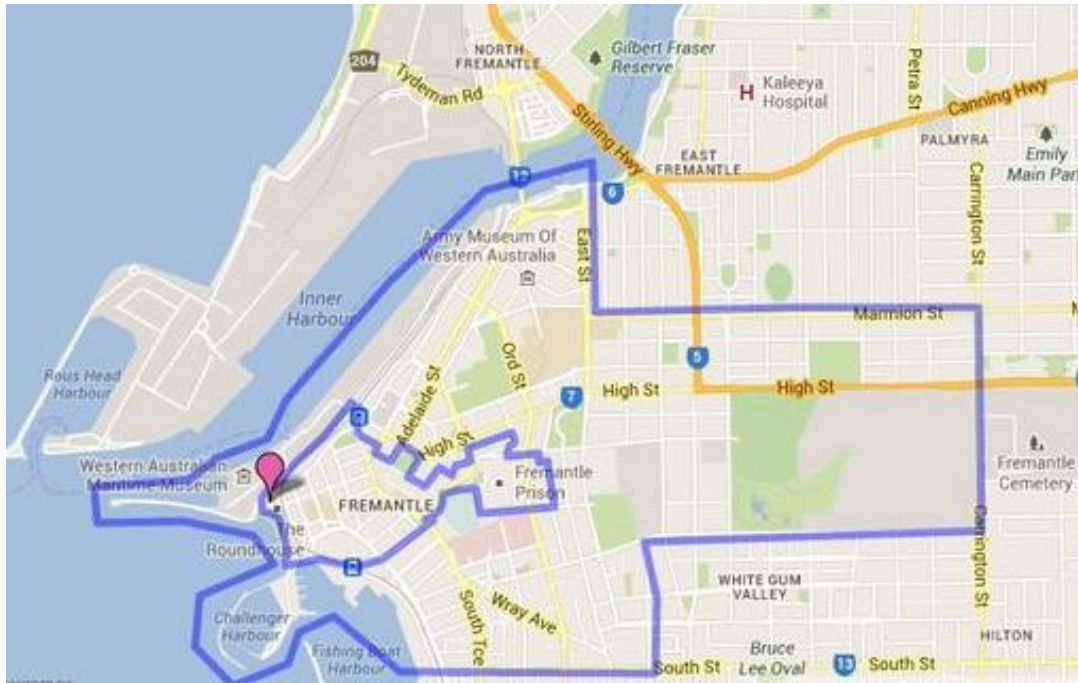


Figure 1. Fremantle map showing the West End and various locations mentioned in the text ⁷

In 1900, there were 2,650 people reported as living in the West End, with most of the residents in boarding houses or tenements that ranged in condition from poor to derelict.⁸ In the late nineteenth century, the Fremantle rate books show that the largest group of workers in the West End were industrial workers, which included waterside workers, blacksmiths, bootmakers, carpenters, carters, clerks, mariners and shipwrights.⁹

In 1896, there were approximately fifteen hotels and twenty boarding houses catering for locals and visitors, with most of their residents living in overcrowded conditions.¹⁰ One boarding-house proprietor proudly advised prospective tenants that she ‘never put more than

⁶ “A Travel Guide to Fremantle Western Australia. Fremantle’s West End,” accessed September 20, 2020, <https://fremantlewesternaustralia.com.au/fremantle-west-end.htm>.

⁷ “City of Fremantle: Fremantle Map,” accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/fremantle-map-0>.

⁸ “Fremantle Local Board of Health Files,” Western Australian Archives 612, Series 1342, Item 59, Minutes 1886–1902, State Records Office of Western Australia, Perth; McKeough, “A Council & Its Crises,” 22. The entire municipality had a population of 14,623.

⁹ J. K. Ewers, *The Western Gateway: A History of Fremantle* (Perth: UWA Press, 1971), 71.

¹⁰ Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid*, 328.

seven gentlemen in one room'.¹¹ Another establishment was reported to 'have so many beds upstairs that the air was putrid'.¹² According to the *Fremantle Courier* newspaper, such living conditions were against 'modern ideas' of acceptable standards of human habitation.¹³

Fremantle's wharf was also known for its poor sanitary conditions. For example, no toilets were provided for a workforce of up to four hundred workers, leaving them no choice but to use the harbour or surrounding areas.¹⁴

Water Supply

Fremantle's water supply was mainly provided by wells that were often contaminated by poor drainage and crude sanitation systems using cesspits in sandy soil. Cesspits were commonly situated near open wells which provided drinking water for local residents, frequently leading to cases of typhoid and other diseases. In 1893, it was reported that there were 120 cesspits in the West End.¹⁵ An official medical report to the Legislative Council in 1885 stated that typhoid and diphtheria were endemic in Fremantle because of sewage contamination.¹⁶ Some wealthier residents installed rainwater tanks but these were beyond the means of the poor, and the water in them often did not last until the next rainy season.¹⁷ In 1887, George Wriford, the Inspector for Nuisances, advised the Fremantle Council that 'great

¹¹ Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid*, 329.

¹² Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid*, 329.

¹³ McKeough, "A Council & Its Crises," 82.

¹⁴ McKeough, "A Twist in the Turn of the Century," 113.

¹⁵ "Fremantle Local Board of Health," *Inquirer and Commercial News*, June 2, 1893, 8, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/6583763>.

¹⁶ *Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire Into and Report Upon the Sanitary Condition of the City of Perth and the Town of Fremantle, Especially with Regard to the Questions of Water Supply and the Disposal of Sewage. Presented to the Legislative Council* (Perth: Government Printer, 1885),

[https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/intranet/libpages.nsf/WebFiles/Royal+Commission+city+of+Perth+and+the+Town+of+Fremantle+1885/\\$FILE/9464.pdf](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/intranet/libpages.nsf/WebFiles/Royal+Commission+city+of+Perth+and+the+Town+of+Fremantle+1885/$FILE/9464.pdf).

¹⁷ Lionel Frost et al., *Water, History and the Australian City: Urbanism, Suburbanism and Water in a Dry Continent, 1788–2015* (Melbourne: Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities, 2016), 38.

difficulty arises from people having nowhere to throw their slops or dirty water, only the street or yard' and that a drainage system was imperative.¹⁸

The Government realised the urgent need for a clean water supply. Piped water had been available from the wells under Fremantle Gaol since 1874 for the use of shipping and the railway station, and a campaign began in 1880 for the supply to be made available to Fremantle residents. A new well was sunk about sixty feet (just over eighteen metres) in the prison yard and tunnels were dug by convict labour to provide the basis for a reticulated water supply that was operational by May 1888.²⁰ However, this water supply soon proved inadequate and most residents in Fremantle remained reliant on the contaminated water in wells.²¹ Fremantle's sewerage system was finally commissioned in 1912. A main sewer, connected to three septic tanks, was installed near Robb Jetty, south of Fremantle, and the effluent was pumped into the sea.²²

Disease

Typhoid had been rampant in Fremantle since 1875, but cases increased further when men returned from the goldfields in the 1890s.²³ Typhoid had reached epidemic proportions in the goldfields due to the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, combined with a limited and contaminated water supply.²⁴

There were an estimated 16,000 cases of typhoid from 1896 to 1900, which made the period the worst typhoid years in the State's history.²⁵ With so many infected men returning to Fremantle, the disease continued to thrive in the West End's unsanitary conditions.

¹⁸ McKeough, "Caught in an International Crisis," 23; Adele Gaskin, "Public Health in Fremantle 1886–1902." (Unpublished diss., University of Western Australia, 1982), 1; David Woodbury, "The Inspector of Nuisances," The Salvation Army, Army Archives, accessed September 4, 2019, <https://others.org.au/army-archives/the-inspe/>. George Wriford was appointed Inspector of Nuisances on 1 December, 1886. The Inspector of Nuisances was responsible for keeping the city clean, sanitary and safe. This included inspection and condemnation of food offered for sale in the markets and on the streets, inspection of dangerous buildings, nuisances and hoardings, prosecution of breaches of the by-laws and keeping thoroughfares free from obstruction. He also supervised the carters who removed rubbish. It was also his responsibility to sniff out bad smells such as those emanating from swamps and marshlands.

²⁰ Su-Jane Hunt and Geoffrey Bolton, "Cleansing the Dunghill: Water Supply and Sanitation in Perth 1878–1912," *Studies in Western Australian History* 2, (1978): 6, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.780803824>.

²¹ Lionel Frost et al., *Water, History and the Australian City*, 38.

²² Su-Jane Hunt, *Water, The Abiding Challenge* (Perth: Metropolitan Water Board, 1980), 63.

²³ Reece, "Glimpses of Fremantle," 44.

²⁴ Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid*, 319.

²⁵ Gaskin, "Public Health in Fremantle 1886–1902."

Typhoid was also known as ‘the pauperising fever’ as it often took six months or more to recover from the disease.²⁶ It was very difficult for poor families to survive when breadwinners were unable to work for such a long period.

The already overpopulated West End became even more overcrowded during the gold rushes of the 1890s. New boarding and lodging houses were hastily constructed after Fremantle’s population almost tripled from 7,077 in 1891 to 20,444 in 1901.²⁷ The Fremantle Council had no town planning policy at that time, and crude extensions were often tacked onto existing dwellings to accommodate new arrivals. By 1900, the already strained sanitation facilities of the West End were being further overburdened.²⁸ To help accommodate the increased populace, tent camps were established at Ferry Point (also known as Willis’s Point, an area on the south side of the Swan River, which was removed when Fremantle Harbour was developed), Monument Hill and Fremantle Park, shown in figure 1.²⁹ In March 1895, there were one hundred tents occupied by 175 men, women and children at Ferry Point, with no sanitary facilities.³⁰ One newspaper article on typhoid in Fremantle described the canvas town at Ferry Point as a “menace to the health of the town”.³¹ At Monument Hill in 1896, there were 250 people living in 120 tents and there were frequent complaints by the local population, as well as the local Board of Health, about the insanitary living arrangements.³²

Bubonic plague broke out for the first time in Fremantle in 1900. Between 1900 and 1906, there were annual outbreaks, killing a total of nineteen people.³³ One of the plague victims had lived in a dwelling in Pakenham Street where the original cottage had had fourteen rooms added on to it. The Council considered this building so filthy and infested with vermin that it was ordered to be dismantled and the materials were disposed of at sea. Another plague victim had lived in a shared room which was found to have over thirty rat

²⁶ Stannage, *The People of Perth*, 249–250.

²⁷ Hitchcock, *History of Fremantle*, 79.

²⁸ McKeough, "Caught in an International Crisis," 2.

²⁹ Deborah Tout-Smith, *The Foundations of Fremantle: Exploring the Early History of Western Australia's Port City* (Perth: Western Australian Museum, 1998), 47.

³⁰ Ewers, *The Western Gateway*, 81.

³¹ "Fremantle Local Board of Health. Canvas Town," *The West Australian*, March 23, 1895, 3, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/4539682/810631>.

³² "A Canvas Town at Fremantle," *The West Australian*, February 8, 1896, 6, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3079679/813921>.

³³ McKeough, "Caught in an International Crisis," 14.

holes.³⁴ The Secretary of the Central Board of Health wrote in 1903 that ‘much of the soil of Fremantle must be infected, as rats infected with plague have been found in various portions’.³⁵

The arrival of the plague in Fremantle highlighted the appalling living standards and lack of sanitation. It was only after visits by the Health Inspector and the Town Engineer to every dwelling and business in the West End seeking rats, as mapped in figure 2, that some vital improvements were introduced, including the introduction of a Building Code.³⁶ After the third outbreak of bubonic plague in 1902, and because the unsanitary conditions on the wharf had contributed to the incidence of disease, the Fremantle Harbour Trust was established.³⁷ The Trust took control of the harbour on January 1, 1903, and harbour cleanliness gradually improved.³⁸ A register of common lodging and boarding houses in Fremantle was also established in 1903.³⁹

³⁴ McKeough, "Caught in an International Crisis," 13.

³⁵ "Fremantle Local Board of Health Files," Cons: 2790, WAS 1153, Item 1903/08, Bubonic Plague, State Records Office of Western Australia, Perth, quoted in McKeough, "A Council & Its Crises," 65.

³⁶ "Fremantle Municipal Council Files, Box 1, Item 1, Fremantle Requirements," 1902, State Records Office of Western Australia, Perth, quoted in McKeough, "A Council & Its Crises," 85.

³⁷ "Fremantle Municipal Council Files," quoted in McKeough, "A Council & Its Crises," 85.

³⁸ "Fremantle Municipal Council Files," quoted in McKeough, "A Council & Its Crises," 85.

³⁹ McKeough, "A Council & Its Crises," 86.



Figure 2. Hand-drawn map by Dr. Thomas Anderson, the Senior Medical Officer, showing where rats were found in the West End of Fremantle in 1903⁴⁰

However, slum conditions persisted. In 1903, *The Sunday Times* referred to Fremantle as a port of ‘beastly backyards and stinking slums’.⁴¹ In 1904, the same newspaper claimed that ‘only social outcasts dared live in the inner streets of Fremantle’.⁴² However, many poor people had no choice but to live in these conditions.⁴³ This included many impoverished women and their children.

⁴⁰ Central Board of Health Files AN 120/4, Cons: 1003, Item 1903/0418A, Outbreak of Bubonic Plague Fremantle, Second Series of Cases, February 1903, S.R.O. Perth, quoted in McKeough, "A Council & its Crises," 210. Dr. Thomas Lynwolde Anderson had been Quarantine Officer until April, 1900 when he became Senior Medical Officer. One of his first efforts in Fremantle was to establish an office in Cliff Buildings, with J. K. Hitchcock as Secretary.

⁴¹ “Beastly Backyards.”

⁴² “Port Slums. Dens of Dirt and Debauchery,” *The Sunday Times*, April 17, 1904, 8. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/57191744/4266529>.

⁴³ McKeough, “A Twist in the Turn of the Century,” 113.

There were also issues with the availability of fresh food. Fresh milk was often difficult to acquire as most of the supplies were provided to passenger ships. Similarly, fresh fruit and vegetables were also often in short supply in Fremantle.⁴⁴ Because of this, many people suffered from 'Barcoo rot', a form of scurvy caused by the lack of vitamins A, B, C and E, and that led to an ulcerous skin condition and anaemia.⁴⁵

Living conditions in the poorer, low-lying areas of Perth were often no better than in Fremantle. In 1896, a visiting Melbourne reporter observed that Perth was as dirty as the worst Asian ports and that it 'would be no use hosing Perth; it requires to be blown up and not rebuilt'.⁴⁶ The problems were particularly acute in central East Perth, which had absorbed much of the mid-1890s population increase.⁴⁷ The Claise Brook drain was formed by two big open drains flowing from the city catchment area.⁴⁸ By the 1890s, the stench had become notorious and local children were warned to keep away from it.⁴⁹ The Council was so concerned about the unhygienic living conditions in the slum areas that a Central Board of Health was formed in 1903.⁵⁰ There were slums in Pier, William and Wellington streets, and one *Truth* story in February 1904 described the Esplanade as the 'roofless palace of Perth's poor'.⁵¹ The article reported that there were men begging or stealing to survive and sleeping in the open. Women also lived on the streets and often sold sex to pay for a bed for the night.⁵²

⁴⁴ Patricia Brown, *The Merchant Princes of Fremantle* (Nedlands: UWA Press, 1996), 184.

⁴⁵ Brown, *The Merchant Princes*, 184; "Health and How to Protect It. Barcoo Rot and Sickness. Measures for Protection," *The Daily News*, February 14, 1933, trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/83410915.

⁴⁶ G. C. Bolton, *Land of Vision and Mirage, Western Australia Since 1826* (Crawley: UWA Press, 2008), 58.

⁴⁷ *Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into and Report upon the Sanitary Condition*.

⁴⁸ "Sanitary Condition of Perth. Public Minutes," *The Western Australian Times*, January 18, 1878, 2. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2978611>.

⁴⁹ Stannage, *The People of Perth*, 168; Western Australian Museum, "Claisbrook: The Lost River of Perth," accessed June 28, 2021, <https://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/wetlands/city-development/claisbrook>.

⁵⁰ Stannage, *The People of Perth*, 270.

⁵¹ Leigh Straw, *The Petticoat Parade: Madam Monnier and the Roe Street Brothels* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2021), 28.

⁵² Straw, *The Petticoat Parade*, 28.

The Smelters' Camp

The Fremantle Smelters' Camp was established in 1898 on land that was originally a Noongar camping ground.⁵³ It was a shanty town for the homeless in the sand dunes between South Beach and Robb Jetty, with the dunes providing some protection from the prevailing winds.⁵⁴ Robb Jetty had been built on an area previously owned by Captain George Robb, and was later owned by the Manning family.⁵⁵ Dwellings at the camp were built from salvaged materials such as galvanized iron, hessian and kerosene tins from the nearby tip.⁵⁶ Figure 3 shows one of these dwellings. The area was also sometimes known as Poverty Point.⁵⁸

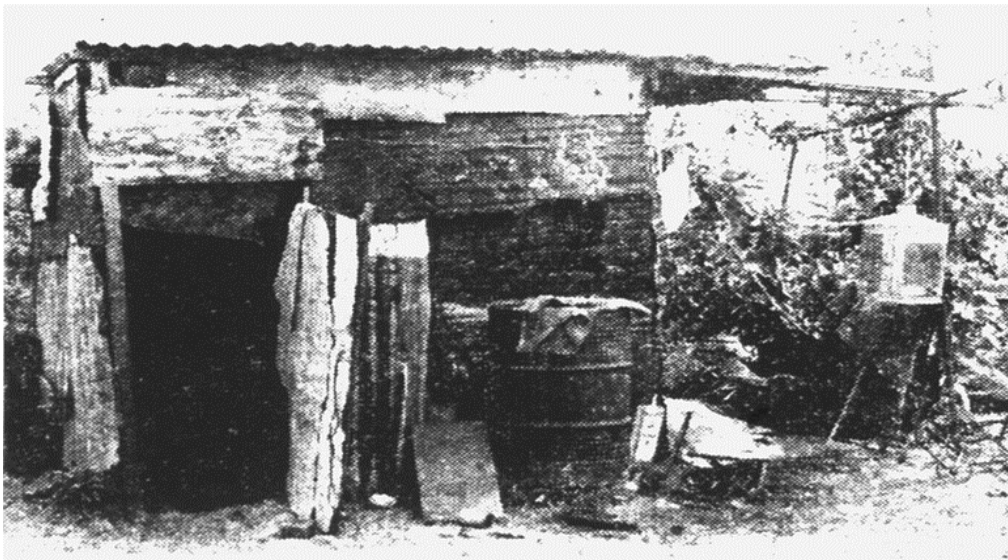


Figure 3. Shanty home at the Fremantle Smelters' Camp⁵⁹

In the 1930s, there was also a Noongar camp between the Smelters' Camp and the abattoirs at Robb Jetty. Charles Fitzsimmons, the fatherly activist of the Smelters' Camp

⁵³ Julie Raffaele, *The Smelters Camp Research Project* (Cockburn: City of Cockburn Council, 2019), 11, <https://history.cockburn.wa.gov.au/getattachment/f968467a-337c-4611-aeee-efd88e8cbe53/The-Smelters-Camp-Research-Project.aspx.11.13>.

⁵⁴ "Statements of Significance for the Fremantle Area and Registered Aboriginal Sites Cantonment Hill, Rocky Bay and Swan River," accessed March 23, 2021, [https://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Statements of Significance Whadjuk Nyoongar.pdf](https://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Statements%20of%20Significance%20Whadjuk%20Nyoongar.pdf).

⁵⁵ "City of Cockburn, Cockburn History, Smelter's Camp, Robb Jetty," <https://history.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Buildings-and-places/Lost-sites/Smelter-s-camp,-Robb-Jetty>. Captain George Robb arrived in Fremantle in 1830 and established a farm on a 2,000-acre (809-hectare) site to the south of Fremantle. Henry Manning was a large land-owner in the colony from 1840. In 1854, he sent his younger brother Charles to manage his estates.

⁵⁶ Raffaele, *The Smelters Camp*, 11.

⁵⁸ Davidson, *Fremantle Impressions*, 246, "They Call It Poverty Point – and No Wonder!," *The Sunday Times*, March 29, 1953, 3, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/4526050>.

⁵⁹ *Another Poverty Point home*, 1953, photograph, "They Call It Poverty Point."

community, described in a letter to the *West Australian* in October 1898 how ‘the men of the camp occupied themselves in fishing, being ‘too proud to steal or beg’ and ‘with boarding houses beyond their means’.⁶⁰ Initially, water was provided by hand-dug wells; later, kerosene tins were used to collect water from the taps at South Beach.⁶¹ The camp provided somewhere to live for the poor who could not even afford the slums of the West End.

After the 1890s gold rushes, many people who returned to Fremantle moved to the Smelters’ Camp and were described as ‘remnants of the gold rush; hardy, determined and independent with a particular aversion to authority of any kind.’⁶² As most of these ex-miners had directly experienced the typhoid problems of the goldfields, they generally tried to keep their surroundings clean, and the Smelters’ Camp was likely more sanitary than the West End at that time.⁶³ Some huts had small gardens, often in old tins, showing that residents had tried to make their shacks homely.⁶⁴ Many people also kept chickens to provide fresh eggs.⁶⁵

A 1928 report in the *Daily News* describes an area to the west of the railway line that ran between Fremantle and Jandakot where a ‘less-inviting prospect as a permanent home-site would be difficult to conceive; yet men have lived there for as long as twenty years.’⁶⁶ There was no mention in the article of women living at the camp. In later years, the camp also provided a home for miners, stockmen, itinerants, travellers and migrants.⁶⁷ Male residents could sometimes find work at the local stables because many racehorses were trained on the beach at South Fremantle. Work was also available at the Robb Jetty abattoirs, skin stores and other industries in the area.⁶⁸

Three lone women are recorded as living at the camp between 1903 and 1914, but there were probably many more unrecorded. One woman was the widow of a bankrupted Fremantle businessman who had later taken his own life after being accused of hiding

⁶⁰ Raffaele, *The Smelters Camp*, 74; Denise Cook, *That Was My Home: Voices from the Noongar Camps in Fremantle and the Western Suburbs* (Nedlands: UWA Publishing, 2019), 66.

⁶¹ “Battlers’ Haven,” *Daily News*, November 13, 1928, 6, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/85155066/8202304>; “Mary Edith Veronica Kemenade (née Inman),” oral history recorded by Denise Cook, November 16, 2012, Cockburn Library, City of Cockburn, posted by Lawley, December 31, 2018, https://www.cockburnlibraries.com.au/blog/local-history/oral-history-mary-kemenade-voices-from-the-camps-oral-histories-2012/?doing_wp_cron=1652215930.2976620197296142578125.

⁶² Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid*, 329.

⁶³ “Battlers’ Haven.”

⁶⁴ “Battlers’ Haven.”

⁶⁵ Davidson, *Fremantle Impressions*, 246.

⁶⁶ “Battlers’ Haven.”

⁶⁷ “City of Cockburn, Cockburn History, Smelter’s Camp, Robb Jetty.”

⁶⁸ Cook, “*That Was My Home*,” 69. This excerpt describes an interview with Jerry Patterson, Daly Street stable owner, in September 2012 on the history of stables in the south Fremantle area.

assets.⁶⁹ Another woman had fled Kalgoorlie after a suspicious death, and later moved to Norfolk Street to start a brothel where she died in an unexplained fire.⁷⁰ A third woman was recorded on the Chesterfield (Fremantle) Electoral Rolls as a domestic servant and residing at the camp, but few other details are known.⁷¹ Lilly Doyle, a well-known prostitute in Fremantle in the early twentieth century, was also reputed to live at the Smelters' Camp but was not recorded on the electoral rolls.⁷²

In an article on the camp in October 1954, *The Sunday Times* reported that 'the existence of the area is a disgrace to authorities and a threat to health' and said 'It is one of the worst living areas in Australia'. The report went on to claim that the camp had 'become a convenient hide-out for a vicious criminal element who are a regular threat to the safety and lives of decent residents of the camp and the adjacent suburb'.⁷³ The Smelters' Camp was officially demolished in the late 1950s but people continued to live illegally at the site.

Conclusion

This chapter has assessed the living conditions and health issues in the poorer areas of Fremantle from 1890 to 1914. Studies have shown that poor living conditions negatively affect both physical and mental health.⁷⁴ Unsanitary living conditions, often associated with overcrowding and poor hygiene, made impoverished women and children more susceptible to disease and were a major factor in poor child health at the time. Typically, the poor suffer more health problems that often lead to reduced life expectancy. Furthermore, health has a substantial impact on the ability to earn a living. When impoverished breadwinners become

⁶⁹ "In Bankruptcy. (Before the Registrar.) Re Robert Wise," *Western Mail*, November 26, 1892, 48, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article33077675>. Emily Wise was the widow (1913–14) of Robert Wise, proprietor of Fremantle Emporium, who was declared bankrupt and later accused of hiding assets.

⁷⁰ "A Fire in France. Blazes in Boulevard Brookman. Mdlle. Mignonne's Maison Guttled," *The Sun*, April 10, 1904, 9, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/23092092>; "A Woman's Agony," *Daily News*, June 1, 1910, 3, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/77832537/7794386>; "Woman's Agony," *Daily News*, June 13, 1910, 4, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/7786732>. Amelia Vasseur, also known as 'Mignonne', is described as "a woman of low character" and was a prostitute linked to a murder in Kalgoorlie. She died in her property, a brothel in Norfolk Street, which was set alight in 1910.

⁷¹ Raffaele, *The Smelters Camp*, 176. Sarah Williams is listed in the South Beach camp from 1903–06, and her occupation given as 'home duties'.

⁷² Elizabeth Lilly Doyle (known as Lilly) was born in Fremantle on June 8, 1867 and died in 1940.

⁷³ "Clean Out This Slum Spot Or Someone Will Be Killed!," *The Sunday Times*, 24 October 1954, 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article59696951>.

⁷⁴ Kyle Linder, "Consequences of Poor Living Conditions on the Community," last modified August 30, 2019, <https://borgenproject.org/tag/consequences-of-poor-living-conditions-on-the-community/>.

injured or ill, the whole family can become caught in a descending spiral of lost income and high medical costs.⁷⁵

In 1884, Fremantle had the highest death rate in the country with a shockingly high infant mortality rate.⁷⁶ In the years to follow, the population increased sharply and overcrowding led to even worse living conditions as well as outbreaks of diseases such as typhoid and bubonic plague. Impoverished women trying to raise their children in such slum conditions often struggled to provide enough food for their children. They also had to contend with health problems caused by their living conditions which would have made an already difficult situation seem almost overwhelming.

⁷⁵ OECD/WHO, *Poverty and Health* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2003), 15.

⁷⁶ Waylen, "Report by the Colonial Surgeon on Public Health for 1883."

Chapter Two: Impoverished Women and Children

“In a free society, married women are the nearest approximation to a slave”¹

Introduction

This chapter outlines the social and legal status of women in Western Australian society during the period 1890 to 1914, with a particular focus on Fremantle women, and explores how society viewed the poor, including single mothers and deserted wives. It also explores employment options for women in Fremantle, and the assisted immigrant program that brought 1,700 single or widowed British women to Western Australia to be domestic servants in the late nineteenth century.² Stories of the lives of four women are used to illustrate typical examples: three women who survived without male or other family support, and a fourth woman who came to Fremantle as part of the assisted immigrant program and was later abandoned by her new husband.

The Whadjuk Noongar people have had a close connection with Fremantle for thousands of years.³ Noongar people generally lived in camps some distance away from the white population because they were discouraged from entering the towns. In the 1860s and 1870s, there were Aboriginal camps at both North Fremantle and Bibra Lake because these areas reportedly had the best food supplies.⁴ From the 1890s to the 1920s, there were also Aboriginal camps around the current site of the East Fremantle Oval.⁵ *The Aborigines Act of 1905* meant that Aboriginal people were increasingly driven to the fringes of society and onto reserves.⁶ In the period 1890 to 1914, there appears to be no record of Aboriginal people

¹ Lawrence Stone, *The Road to Divorce: England 1530–1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 13.

² Gothard, *Blue China*, 2.

³ Norman Tindale, *Tribal Boundaries in Aboriginal Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-233295897/view>. The term ‘Noongar’ refers to the traditional owners of the south-west of Western Australia, extending from north of Jurien Bay to east of Esperance, and including the current City of Perth. There are many spellings of Noongar (for example, Nyungah, Nyungar and Nyoongar); however, the spelling Noongar is used by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) and is widely accepted. Anthropologist Norman Tindale recorded fourteen groups within Noongar country, including Whadjuk in the Perth and Fremantle region. SWALSC and a number of other traditional owners use the name Whadjuk.

⁴ Cook, *That Was My Home*, 62.

⁵ Cook, *That Was My Home*, 65.

⁶ Straw, *The Petticoat Parade*, 34.

living in Fremantle.⁷ Consequently, this thesis focuses on non-Aboriginal women and children.⁸

Legal Status of Women in Western Australia 1829–1914

The rule of English law had been declared in Western Australia when Captain James Stirling landed at Fremantle on June 18, 1829.⁹ Stirling, first appointed as Lieutenant Governor, was the sole source of legal authority in the new colony, and he relied on law books sent to him from England, including *Blackstone's Commentaries*.¹⁰ He reportedly said 'I believe I am the first Governor who ever formed a settlement without Commission, Laws, Instructions and Salary'.¹¹ To help him govern the colony, Stirling appointed Justices of the Peace and Resident Magistrates. In 1831, he was appointed as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the colony, and Executive and Legislative Councils were established. These councils had the right to make laws but, as with the other Australian colonies, all legislation had to be approved by the Crown.¹²

Marriage at that time was an uneven power structure in which men ruled over women. Under English law, wives were classed with "minors and mental deficient" and did not have responsibility under the law.¹³ Property, earnings and liberty, as well as any children that a woman gave birth to, all belonged to her husband. Married women could own nothing until

⁷ "City of Fremantle: Aboriginal history," accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/council/about-city-fremantle/aboriginal-history>.

⁸ "School of Indigenous Studies Essay Writing Advice, University of Western Australia," accessed April 11, 2021, <https://www.sis.uwa.edu.au/students/essay-writing-advice>. In 2013, Western Australia's Department of Indigenous Affairs replaced the term 'Indigenous' in its title with 'Aboriginal'. The stated reason was that: 'The Department of Aboriginal Affairs (formerly Indigenous Affairs) has been renamed to more accurately reflect the identity of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. This change is in line with requests from the State's Aboriginal community'.

⁹ "Western Australian courts," The Prosecution Project, Griffith University, accessed June 16 2021, <https://prosecutionproject.griffith.edu.au/other-resources/western-australian-courts/>.

¹⁰ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765–1770). Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780) wrote the 'Blackstone Commentaries', an influential eighteenth-century treatise on England's common law. The work is divided into four volumes: the rights of persons, the rights of things, private wrongs and public wrongs.

¹¹ "Documenting a Democracy. Australia's Story. Commission Appointing Stirling Governor and Commander-in-Chief 4 March 1831 (UK)," National Archives of Australia, archived from the original document on February 7, 2008, <https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item-did-94.html#:~:text=Stirling's%20authority%20had%20rested%20on,the%20government%20of%20the%20Colony.>

¹² Susan Hart, "Widowhood and Remarriage in Colonial Australia" (PhD diss., University of Western Australia, 2009), 64; Enid Russell, *A History of the Law in Western Australia and Its Development from 1829 to 1979* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1980).

¹³ Judy Mackinolty and Heather Radi, eds., *In Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law, 1788-1979* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), 64.

the passage of the *Married Women's Property Act* in 1892, although widowed women could own land.¹⁴ A married woman could not make a will without the permission of her husband, and he could revoke the will after her death.¹⁵

As part of the marriage service, a wife had to promise to “obey”—and this was not a token promise.¹⁶ Prior to 1858, a man could desert his family and still legally be entitled to claim all his wife's earnings and possessions; until 1884, a woman could be jailed if she refused her husband his marital rights; and until 1891, the law entitled a husband to physically stop a woman from leaving him.¹⁷ Lawrence Stone, in his book *The Road to Divorce: England 1530–1987*, describes married women up to and during the nineteenth century as ‘the nearest approximation in a free society to a slave’.¹⁸

Some historians claim that wife-beating was an accepted feature of life in nineteenth-century Australia.¹⁹ Domestic violence was widespread, and generally considered to be an acceptable way to correct female behaviour. These attitudes meant that police were reluctant to act against husbands, and the court often accepted a husband's violence towards his wife on the basis that the wife had not adequately fulfilled her wifely obligations to him.²⁰ Women's vulnerability to male aggression was increased by their dependence and compounded by bearing large numbers of children. By the 1870s, the average family comprised eight children, but some women bore many more. Women's married lives were usually a succession of pregnancies, miscarriages, births and breast-feeding.²¹ Married women could expect to bear children continuously into their mid-forties. Such numerous

¹⁴ Gender, Reece Plunkett, in *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia*, Gregory and Gothard, (eds), 403; *Married Women's Property Act 1892, Act 20*,

http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/wa/num_act/mwpa189255vn20367/mwpa189255vn20367.pdf.

¹⁵ Rosalind F. Croucher and Prue Vines, *Succession: Families, Property and Death: Text and Cases*, 4th ed. (Chatswood: LexisNexis Butterworths, 2013), 19.

¹⁶ Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates, eds., *The Murdoch Ethos: Essays in Australian History in Honour of Foundation Professor Geoffrey Bolton* (Murdoch: Murdoch University, 1989), 186.

¹⁷ Frances and Scates, *The Murdoch Ethos*, 186–7.

¹⁸ Stone, *The Road to Divorce*, 13.

¹⁹ Hilary Golder and Diane Kirkby, "Marriage and Divorce Law Before the Family Law Act 1975," in *Sex, Power and Justice: Historical Perspectives of Law in Australia*, ed. Diane Kirkby (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 156; Hilary Golder, *Divorce in 19th Century New South Wales* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1985), 2.

²⁰ Margaret Grellier, "The Family: Some Aspects of Its Demography and Ideology in Mid-Nineteenth Century Western Australia," in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. C. T. Stannage (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), 499–505; Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, and Susan Sheridan, eds., *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests The 1890s* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 8; Hart, "Widowhood and Remarriage," 68; A. James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life* (London: Routledge, 1992).

²¹ Magarey, Rowley, and Sheridan, eds., *Debutante Nation*, 9.

pregnancies imposed a huge burden on women's bodies, often resulting in infections such as septicaemia, prolapses, varicose veins and ruptures; deaths during childbirth were not uncommon.²²

Many women were probably unaware of their legal position as wives and widows, and some were shocked to discover how the law discriminated against them. For example, Dorothy Montefiore, an English-Australian socialist, poet and biographer, became a suffragist when she realised that her late husband could have willed her children away from her care.²³ Under English common law, fathers had custody of children and the right to will custody away from the mother; a widow could discover after her husband's death that she had no claims to her own children. An English statute of 1839 gave mothers the right to petition for custody, but only of children under seven and only if the mother was of 'irreproachable character'.²⁴ These laws and statutes gave men a significant weapon with which to control their wives. Not only could the husband solely decide such matters as the children's education and religious upbringing, he could also use his legal custody rights to deter his wife from leaving him.²⁵

If a husband had not willed away custody of the children, then widowhood could advantage women because it gave them legal rights over their children.²⁶ However, remarriage jeopardised those rights because stepfathers had the same legal rights over their wife's children that they did over their own.²⁷

Summing up the status of marriage in the colony, one judge declared 'marriage in our society is the only mode by which a woman could attain advancement in life'.²⁸ However, there was no financial security if the marriage failed and the woman and her children were abandoned. This was because there was generally no financial support from the State.²⁹ Even if they had wanted to, most women could not have left their husbands because they relied

²² Margaret Anderson, "19th Century Childbirth," Adelaidia, History Trust of South Australia, uploaded December 11, 2013, <https://adelaidia.history.sa.gov.au/subjects/19th-century-childbirth>.

²³ Heather Radi, "Whose Child? Custody of Children in NSW 1854–1934," in *In Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law 1788–1879*, eds. Judy Mackinolty and Heather Radi (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1979), 72.

²⁴ Mackinolty and Radi, *In Pursuit of Justice*, 64.

²⁵ Mackinolty and Radi, *In Pursuit of Justice*, 121.

²⁶ Hart, "Widowhood and Remarriage," 69.

²⁷ Hart, "Widowhood and Remarriage," 69.

²⁸ "Law and Criminal Courts," *South Australian Register*, May 19, 1862, 3, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/3918751>.

²⁹ Denise George, *Mary Lee: The Life and Times of a 'Turbulent Anarchist' and Her Battle for Women's Rights* (Mile End: Wakefield Press, 2018), 71.

totally on their husbands to financially support themselves and their children. Furthermore, divorce was socially unacceptable, and divorced women often treated as outcasts. Because of this, many women had no choice but to stay in unhappy marriages.³⁰

Social Expectations

In the late nineteenth century, women were expected to live within the constraints of a society that regarded them as having little value.³¹ Societal expectations of femininity considered young women as frail but appealing beings who were intellectually inferior but morally superior, and whose role was to be passive, decorative and untarnished.³² By Victorian feminine ideals, a woman should be the 'perfect lady' regardless of her background. Even impoverished women who had to work outside the home to earn a living were expected to represent the 'reputable working class and the deserving poor'.³³ In Australia at that time, social perceptions were that the lives of women should focus on domestic duties, home and family.³⁴

Impoverished Women and Children

Persistent poverty and long-term unemployment during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century meant that many Fremantle people struggled to survive, with women and children suffering the most. Death, desertion or illness of a breadwinner could push even relatively comfortable families into poverty. For women already struggling, destitution was frequently immediate. The most in need were deserted women with children, the elderly who had no relatives to support them, and those who were chronically sick or insane.³⁵ The federal government had assumed some responsibility for the aged and infirm when it passed the *Invalid and Old-Age Pensions Act* in 1908 but, in addition to strict eligibility criteria

³⁰ C. N. Trueman, "Women in 1900," The History Learning Site, modified March 17, 2015, historylearningsite.co.uk; Olwn Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe*, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 3, Sep., 1997, Published by: [Cambridge University Press](http://www.cambridge.org), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i325020>

³¹ George, *Mary Lee*, 67.

³² Mary S. Hartman, *Victorian Murderesses: A True History of Thirteen Respectable French and English Women Accused of Unspeakable Crimes* (London: Robson Books, 1985), 2.

³³ Martha Vicinus, ed., *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), x, xiii.

³⁴ Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth-Century Australia* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 88; Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 53.

³⁵ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 16.

regarding income and assets, there were equally rigorous moral requirements. For example, a conviction for drunkenness could result in the suspension of payments.³⁶ In Western Australia, pensions for widows were not introduced until 1941.³⁷ A Supporting Mother's Benefit was only introduced in 1973.³⁸

Absolute poverty has been described as when individuals lack the basic necessities of life to 'keep body and soul together and being so poor that you are deprived of basic human needs'.³⁹ Nineteenth-century colonial social attitudes towards the destitute were often discriminatory and unforgiving. It was widely held that 'idleness and drunkenness' were at the heart of poverty, and the poor had only themselves to blame for their unfortunate situations. Women, and unmarried mothers in particular, were the common target of society's discriminatory and unforgiving attitudes to those who did not 'conform' and who were often considered the 'undeserving poor'.⁴⁰

At that time, having a child out of wedlock was considered a great disgrace. Socially, the whole family would be shamed if one of their daughters gave birth to an illegitimate child and so families usually tried to conceal an illegitimate birth. Illegitimate children were often raised by their biological grandparents as the sibling of the actual mother. Many children did not know the truth and grew up thinking that their birth-mother was their sister.⁴¹ Unmarried mothers who tried to raise their child were in a very difficult position because they were often shunned by society, and employers were reluctant to hire an unmarried mother. Childcare was also very difficult to obtain.⁴²

Women living apart from their parents often tried to pass themselves off as widows. This provided an uncomplicated explanation for the absence of a husband and father to children, and also resulted in a social position that was respectable and blameless.⁴³ For some

³⁶ T. H. Kewley, *Social Security in Australia, 1900-72*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1973), 75-76.

³⁷ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia - Glossary Term: Widows' Pension (1941 -)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified March 2, 2015, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01090b.htm>.

³⁸ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia - Glossary Term: Supporting Mother's Benefit (1973-1977)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified February 29, 2016, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01091b.htm>.

³⁹ Peter Townsend and David Gordon, eds., *Breadline Europe: The Measurement of Poverty* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2002), 75.

⁴⁰ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 16.

⁴¹ This was the case for my grandmother's first child who was born before she was married and was raised as her brother. He was only informed of the truth in his fifties when my grandmother died.

⁴² O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison*, 118.

⁴³ Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute*, 131.

unmarried women with dependent children, an assumed identity of deserted wife at least conferred the respectability that came with marriage and provided their children with superficial legitimacy. The shame of an illegitimate birth was so great for some women that they were driven to kill their newborn child.⁴⁴ There are fifty-five known cases of infanticide, neonaticide, concealment of birth or some combination of these that occurred in Western Australia before 1901.⁴⁵ However, there are probably many more cases that have never been discovered. A poverty-stricken unmarried woman finding herself pregnant would have had few options and may have felt that she had no other alternative but to dispose of the baby.⁴⁶

Men deserting their families was a serious issue in Fremantle during the nineteenth century, especially when gold was discovered at Kalgoorlie in the 1890s. Many men who left their families to seek their fortune on the goldfields did not return, and during these gold-rush years, men's abandonment of their families emerged as a serious social problem.⁴⁷ Unskilled labourers often needed to travel to where the work was, and short-term separation from the family was not uncommon. But having left the area, it was often all too easy for a man to continue to move on.⁴⁸ For a woman responsible for the support of young children, being deserted usually meant destitution.⁴⁹ In 1901, the Western Australia census recorded twenty-eight percent of men living apart from their wives.⁵⁰

Some of the things that destitute women did to survive with their families included sewing sheets of newspaper together to make blankets to keep the family warm at night. When available, flour bags were used for clothes, nappies and household cloths. Any old clothes that could no longer be worn were taken apart and reused, usually to make clothes for the children. However, poverty in some families was so acute that children were unable to attend school because of a lack of clothing.⁵¹ Some women had only one dress, and this

⁴⁴ Christine Alder and Kenneth Polk, *Child Victims of Homicide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 31.

⁴⁵ Gardiner, "It Is Almost as If There Were a Written Script." 'Infanticide' is the killing of a baby younger than one year old by her/his genetic mother. Crucially, infanticide can only be committed by a child's mother; if a father kills his baby, it is considered murder. 'Neonaticide' is a subcategory that refers to the killing of a baby by her/his genetic mother within twenty-four hours of the baby's birth. 'Concealment of birth' refers to the crime of hiding the dead body of a baby after her/his birth to hide the fact that they were born.

⁴⁶ Elaine Farrell, "'Infanticide of the Ordinary Character': An Overview of the Crime in Ireland, 1850–1900," *Irish Economic and Social History* 39, no. 1 (2012): 56–72, <https://doi.org/10.7227%2FIESH.39.1.4>.

⁴⁷ Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute*, xv.

⁴⁸ Patricia Grimshaw, Chris McConville, and Ellen McEwen, eds., *Families in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 157–8.

⁴⁹ Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute*, 4.

⁵⁰ Magarey, Rowley, and Sheridan, eds., *Debutante Nation*, 96.

⁵¹ Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid*, 328.

would be washed and dried overnight so it could be worn again the next day.⁵² Women often helped each other by passing around baby clothes. When a baby had outgrown its clothes, they were passed on to another woman for her child, and the clothes were used this way until they were completely worn out.⁵³ Families often lived on bread and dripping or soup because it could be made out of almost anything, including fish heads and potato peelings.⁵⁴

The Destitute Persons Relief Ordinance Act of 1845 (WA) had established women as dependent upon men, making them reliant on the generosity of relatives who were most likely struggling to support their own families.⁵⁵ Under the Act, men were responsible for their families as well as their widowed mothers, and were expected to support them.⁵⁶ The Act was introduced in response to the increasing prevalence of men deserting their wives and children, and was essentially to stop people avoiding their financial responsibilities towards their dependents.⁵⁷ Although it stated that widows or deserted wives with children were entitled to be given relief, the government considered it necessary to ensure that any application was a deserving one.⁵⁸ Near-relatives could be summoned to appear in court to explain why they could not offer support, and could be required by law to do so. In cases where men had deserted their wives and children, they could be arrested and imprisoned as well as being required to provide support.⁵⁹ However, there were very few charges brought against relatives at this time as a result of this Act, possibly because imprisonment of husbands of family members did nothing to help the destitute. Although the Act gave courts the right to seize assets to assist deserted wives, most impoverished people had few assets to seize.⁶⁰ Another section of the Act allowed children over the age of ten years to be ‘indentured’ to work as an apprentice to ‘any master of mistress willing to receive them’ in any ‘suitable trade, business or employment’ until they were eighteen years old.⁶¹

⁵² Wendy Lowenstein, *Weevils in the Flour: An Oral Record of the 1930s Depression in Australia*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition. (Carlton North: Scribe Publications, 1998), 22.

⁵³ Lowenstein, *Weevils in the Flour*, 25.

⁵⁴ Melissa K. Norris, “10 Things Our Grandparents Reused During the Great Depression,” accessed November 19, 2020, <https://melissaknorris.com/10-things-our-grandparents-reused-during-the-great-depression>.

⁵⁵ *Destitute Persons Relief Ordinance 1845* (9 Vict., no. 2), accessed June 6, 2021, https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrttitle_10987_homepage.html.

⁵⁶ *Destitute Persons Relief Ordinance 1845*, Clause 2.

⁵⁷ James Longmore, “Report by the Inspector of Charitable Institutions,” *Western Australian Proceedings of Parliament*, 1 (1899): 4.

⁵⁸ James Longmore, “Report by the Superintendent of Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions,” *Western Australian Proceedings of Parliament*, 1 (1898): 5.

⁵⁹ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 15.

⁶⁰ *Destitute Persons Relief Ordinance 1845*, Section 4.

⁶¹ *Destitute Persons Relief Ordinance 1845*, Section 11.

Three women who directly experienced the struggle of surviving economically in Fremantle at this time were Amy Ingram, Lucy Bant and Kate Hainey. Their life stories are presented below to illustrate how they coped with poverty under the living conditions described in Chapter One and the legal status and societal perceptions outlined above.

Amy Ingram⁶²

Amy Ingram was born in Happy Valley, South Australia, in 1871. Her family moved to Western Australia in 1895 when they received a Government land grant of 340 acres (138 hectares) in Narrogin. There were ten children in the family, of which Amy was the fifth and the third daughter. The Ingrams were devout Christians who took part in all their church's activities, and some of the sons became preachers.⁶³

Soon after moving to Narrogin, Amy met Henry William Devenish who was working as a farm cook and they moved to Perth together in 1896.⁶⁴ At that time, she was aged twenty-five and Henry was forty-six. Henry was the grandson of Henry Trigg, the Superintendent of Public Works for Western Australia from 1839 to 1851. Henry Sr. had overseen the building of the first Government House in Perth as well as the Causeway, Canning Bridge, the Rottne Lighthouse and many other projects. He was also the founder of the Congregational Church in Perth and very religious. One of the Perth 'elite', he owned a large parcel of land in St Georges Terrace that extended down to the river. His daughter Amelia had married Henry Thomas Devenish in 1848, and Henry William was their first son.⁶⁵

Henry William Devenish married Margaret Emma McKenzie in 1871, with whom he had eleven children.⁶⁶ Despite being from a 'good' family, Henry had been convicted of forgery while an employee of the Railways Department and served five years in Fremantle

⁶² Amy Ingram was born on May 20, 1871, and died on April 6, 1947. Details from unpublished family history held by author.

⁶³ Lorraine M. C. Pomery and Lionel Merrett, comps., *The Family History of Richard and James Rowe Pomery* (Port Elliot: L. M. C. Pomery, 1977), 50.

⁶⁴ Amelia de Burgh, "Riding Through Life. Reminiscences by Amelia (Millie) de Burgh," 1990, Unpublished personal memoirs written for her family, typescript, 11. Henry William Devenish was born on November 5, 1850, and died on May 4, 1930.

⁶⁵ Bruce Devenish, *Man of Energy and Compassion: The Life, Letters and Times of Henry Trigg, Swan River Pioneer and Church Founder* (Perth: Wongaburra Enterprises, South Perth, 1996).
Marriages (1841-1947) Registration Number 3287. <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-justice/online-index-search-tool>. Accessed March 27, 2023.

prison (1890 to 1895.)⁶⁷ When Henry was released, it was prudent for him to leave Perth and he managed to acquire a position as a farm cook in Narrogin where he met Amy. In 1896 Henry and Amy moved to Fremantle, where they lived together in Cliff Street in the West end, and had four children. Henry and Amy never married as Henry remained married to Margaret McKenzie. However, Amy was known locally as ‘Mrs. Devenish’, and they passed themselves off as a married couple because living as an unwed couple would have been a disgrace at that time.⁶⁸

Henry was not a good provider, and Amy helped support the family by doing housework and washing for other families. A midwife attended the birth of Amy’s youngest child and only daughter Amelia (known as Millie) but, according to family lore, ‘went on the booze’ the next day and did not come back. Leo, who was fourteen and had already left school, looked after his mother and the other children because Henry was away. Amy returned to work when the baby was just ten days old, taking the infant with her in a basket as there was no pram. When Millie was slightly older and became difficult to take to work, the two youngest sons Horace (seven) and Frank (four) looked after Millie while Amy worked. In the early twentieth century, it was common in poor families for such young children to look after even younger siblings while their mothers worked. Meanwhile, Leo was doing whatever work he could find to help to support the family.⁶⁹

Henry was seldom around. He generally worked away from Fremantle, occasionally sending home money but usually broke. He was described as ‘being most generous to his friends, to whom he would give his last shilling if they needed it, and then turn up at home stony broke’.⁷⁰ Shortly after Millie’s birth, Amy was left to fend for herself and her children when Henry ceased returning. Between 1912 and 1918, Amy and the children lived in rooms around Fremantle as she continued to support the family by doing housework and laundry for other people. Leo had various short-term jobs to help support the family, served in the Home Defence as shown in figure 4, and finally obtained a position as a clerk at Burns Philp in Fremantle. He also wrote freelance articles for various newspapers to earn extra income. Luckily, many of these articles and the numerous letters that he wrote have been preserved by the family.

⁶⁷ “Alleged Defalcations in the Railway Department,” *The West Australian*, 31 March 31, 1890, 3, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3133148/751010>.

⁶⁸ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 11.

⁶⁹ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 1.

⁷⁰ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 2.



Figure 4. Amy with (from left to right) Leo, Horace, Amelia and Frank in May 1918. Leo is in his Home Defence uniform.⁷¹

In 1913, when Millie was twenty months old, the family ‘took rooms’ in a two-bedroom, semi-detached cottage with Bill and Lucy Bant at 133 South Terrace, Fremantle. They had one room and use of the kitchen.⁷² The family stayed there until Millie was four and a half. There was also another family living in the house with two teenage girls. This meant there were usually fourteen people living in the house. The Bants and their three children had a bedroom, Amy and her four children had the second bedroom, and the other family of four slept in an enclosed veranda at the front of the house. At various times, Amy

⁷¹ Family photograph in the possession of the author. Home Defence was the Home Guard. Leo was a volunteer who served at Fort Forest at North Fremantle during WW1. His uniform was supplied. After being on night duty at Fort Forest he often cycled back to the army barracks in Fremantle to spend the remainder of the night. Leo was only 16 when WW1 broke out and he was the sole support for his mother and younger siblings so did not enlist but he served in Home Defence in Fremantle throughout the war.

⁷² de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 3.

and her children also lived in Holland Street, Mary Street (now Solomon Street), Hampton Road and Cliff Street in Fremantle.⁷³

Life was hard for the family. Millie wrote in her memoirs that her mother sewed together sheets of newspaper to help keep them warm at night because they could not afford blankets.⁷⁴ Pollard bags on the floor were also part of their bedding. As in many homes at that time, the family all slept together. The children used to walk to Coal Beach (now called Bathers Beach) to scavenge for coal so that Amy could light a fire for cooking. At that time, coal shipments came into Coal Beach to be transported through the Whalers Tunnel to High Street, and poor families often scavenged for pieces of coal.⁷⁵ Leo also collected pieces of timber and case board that were washed up on Coal Beach, and used these to build furniture for the family. He built a high-chair for Millie when she was a toddler, but this eventually collapsed.⁷⁶

Amy received no assistance from her family because they strongly disapproved of her living with Henry Devenish. Her mother (Amelia Ingram, née Pomery) visited once when the family lived in South Terrace; Millie describes her as ‘stern-faced, dressed in complete black, and utterly unapproachable’.⁷⁷

In May 1918, as the financial situation during the First World War became even more desperate, Amy responded to an advertisement for a position as housekeeper to George Edward Hargreaves and went to live on a small farm in Maida Vale, taking the three youngest children with her. In those days, Maida Vale was a rural area. The farm was approximately one hundred acres (forty hectares), where the Perth airport is now located. Leo remained working in Fremantle, boarding with the Bants in South Terrace and helping his mother financially whenever he could. He was also a volunteer in the Home Defence, stationed at Fort Forrest in North Fremantle. When not on duty, he used to ride his bicycle to Maida Vale on weekends to visit the family. Life on the farm was very hard for the family. Everyone was expected to work on the property, doing tasks such as milking cows and caring for sheep, pigs and chickens, which meant that the children rarely attended school.⁷⁸

⁷³ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 4.

⁷⁴ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 4.

⁷⁵ Coal can still occasionally be found washed ashore at Bathers Beach.

⁷⁶ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 5.

⁷⁷ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 5.

⁷⁸ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 9–15.

In January 1921, Amy married George Hargreaves in the Methodist Manse in Guildford. Amy was fifty and George was fifty-eight.⁷⁹ However, the farm was struggling, hampered by a lack of water. Despite gradually selling off the farm equipment and household possessions to keep going, the family eventually had to leave the property and moved to Caversham in 1925.⁸⁰ Once again, Amy was doing domestic work for other people to feed her family. Meanwhile, George Hargreaves picked up short-term work for other farmers which meant that he was often away. The family continued to struggle and in 1936, moved back to South Terrace to again lodge with the Bants.⁸¹ George Hargreaves died in October 1942 after a year or so of indifferent health, aged seventy-nine. Amy stayed on in Fremantle. She was close to her eldest son Leo and his family, and also remained close friends with the Bants her whole life. On April 6, 1947, Amy died at the age of seventy-five and is buried in Fremantle Cemetery.⁸² Millie described her mother as ‘a very proud, iron-willed person’.⁸³

Lucy Bant⁸⁴

Lucy Andrews Bant (née Andrews), shown in figure 5, was born in Thornton Park, South Australia, in 1870. She married William (Bill) John Bant on December 5, 1901 at the Methodist Parsonage in Pirie Street, Adelaide.⁸⁵ In 1902, they moved to Fremantle where they lived initially in Cliff Street in the West End, and had five children: Dorothy Martin Grace (b. 1902) who died aged five years, Charles William Leewin (Jock) (b. 1904), Clarice Veronica Andrews (b. 1908), Richard (b. 1910) who died at birth and Eric Richard Clyde (b. 1911).⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Western Australian Marriages (1841-1947) Registration Number 6100025. <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-justice/online-index-search-tool>.. Accessed March 27, 2023. .

⁸⁰ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 38.

⁸¹ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 59.

⁸² “Fremantle Cemetery, Plot Methodist-Mon B4-0330, Memorial ID 213409117,” Find a Grave, Fremantle, accessed October 6, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/639483/fremantle-cemetery>.

⁸³ de Burgh, “Riding Through Life,” 102.

⁸⁴ *South Australian Births, Index of Registrations 1842 to 1906*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. & South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society. & Macbeth Genealogical Services. (1998). *South Australian births, registrations 1842 to 1906*. Adelaide, S. Aust. : Hampton, Vic : South Australian Genealogy & Heraldry Society ; Macbeth Genealogical Services [Accessed March 27, 2023](https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-justice/online-index-search-tool). . Lucy Andrews Bant was born on March 3, 1870, and died on October 9, 1957.

⁸⁵ “Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950,” [s. Genealogy SA](https://www.genealogy.com.au/index.php?option=com_gsa@view+gsa&layout+research&collection_id=marriage). Marriage Registrations. Book/Page 209/831, https://www.genealogy.com.au/index.php?option=com_gsa@view+gsa&layout+research&collection_id=marriage accessed march 27, 2023

Western Australian Births (1841-1922) Registration Numbers 3012, 2700500, 2700573, 2700473. <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-justice/online-index-search-tool>.. Accessed March 27, 2023.



Figure 5. Lucy Bant, 1952⁸⁷

Bill Bant was a waterside worker ('lumper') and was described as 'a bit of a drunkard' who rarely arrived home with his wages intact on pay-night. It was obviously not a happy marriage, and Lucy referred to the lumpers as 'the scum of the earth'.⁸⁸ At night and early in the morning, she cleaned offices to support the family and also let rooms to make ends meet. For many years, the family lived in a two-bedroom, semi-detached cottage at 133 South Terrace, Fremantle, usually with two other families in the house as lodgers. A photo of the house is shown in figure 6. All five members of the family slept in one bedroom. In 1913, another family of five had the second bedroom while a third family of four slept in an enclosed part of the verandah. Lucy did not provide meals for the lodgers. The other families had use of the kitchen but needed to provide their own fuel for the fire for cooking. At that time, it was usual for fourteen or more people to be living in the small two-bedroom house.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *Charlie Bant's Mum*, 1952, photograph (cropped), Lucy Andrews Bant, Gallery, Ancestry: Genealogy, Family Trees and Family History Records, image shared by Max Swan on June 11, 2017, https://www.ancestry.com.au/mediaui-viewer/tree/169718938/person/262206203799/media/4efc8d3b-06b1-4542-b29c-c5291bd1b2d8?use_PUBJs=true.

⁸⁸ de Burgh, "Riding Through Life," 4.

⁸⁹ de Burgh, "Riding Through Life," 3.



Figure 6. 133 South Terrace, Fremantle, 2020⁹⁰

Even though Bill did not support the family and Lucy had to work long hours to support them, she remained married to him because divorce was considered socially unacceptable and a divorced woman could be shunned by society.⁹¹ Lucy died on October 9, 1957 at the age of eighty-six, two years after Bill, and is buried in Fremantle Cemetery.⁹²

⁹⁰ Photo taken by author in November, 2020.

⁹¹ C. N. Trueman, "Women in 1900," The History Learning Site, modified March 17, 2015, historylearningsite.co.uk; Olwn Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe*, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 3, Sep., 1997, Published by: Cambridge University Press, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i325020>

⁹² "Fremantle Cemetery, Plot Anglican-Mon A8-0462, Memorial ID FB00020218," Find a Grave, Fremantle, accessed November 22, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/639483/fremantle-cemetery>.

Kate Hainey⁹³

Catherine Mary Hainey was born in Victoria Plains, Moora District, Western Australia, in 1882 and was the only daughter of Patrick Hainey and Anna Dix.⁹⁴ Born legally blind, she had four younger brothers: John (b. 1886) who died at birth, Peter Joseph (b. 1887), Michael Joseph (b. 1890) and Joseph Patrick (b. 1891).⁹⁵ Patrick Hainey had been transported as a convict to Western Australia on the *Phoebe Dunbar* in 1849 when he was fifteen after being convicted of larceny during the Irish Potato Famine.⁹⁶ In 1891, Kate and her brothers were orphaned and the children were separated, with Kate being brought up in ‘a Home for children with disabilities’.⁹⁷

After this, Kate lived at the Home of the Good Shepherd in Leederville. This was a Home for “Destitute Women and Girls” who were generally sent there by the Police Court but it also accepted women and girls with intellectual and other disabilities.⁹⁸ Kate lived at the Home of the Good Shepherd on and off for more than nine years, and left for the last time in May 1912.⁹⁹ She later moved to Fremantle, and entered the Women’s Home (now the

⁹³ [Western Australian Births \(1841-1922\) Registration Number 23074](https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-justice/online-index-search-tool). Accessed March 27, 2023. <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-justice/online-index-search-tool>.

Catherine Mary Hainey was born in 1882 (date unknown) and died on February 13, 1932.

⁹⁴ “. Patrick Hainey was born in 1834 in Monaghan Ireland (date unknown) and died on February 11, 1891. Australian Death Index Reg. No. 123 Mary Anna Dix was born on October 21, 1870 in New Norcia but when she died is unrecorded. Western Australian Births (1841-1922) Registration Number 12196. <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-justice/online-index-search-tool>. Accessed March 27, 2023.

⁹⁵ Western Australian Births (1841-1922) Registration Number 28823. <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-justice/online-index-search-tool>. Accessed March 27, 2023.

⁹⁶ “Patrick Hainey, Convict Record 2603, Phoebe Dunbar,” *1788-1868 Convict Records*. Records kept at the State Records Office of Western Australia, Alexander Library, Perth Cultural Centre, Perth, WA 6000. Accessed March 27, 2023. .

⁹⁷ “Just Kate,” State Library of Western Australia, last modified October 20, 2020, [Just Kate | State Library of Western Australia \(slwa.wa.gov.au\)](https://slwa.wa.gov.au/stories/wa=history/just-kate) <https://slwa.wa.gov.au/stories/wa=history/just-kate> accessed 19 September 2021 This article states that Kate had lived in a Home for children with disabilities; however, it has not been possible to confirm which Home it was. As Kate was a Catholic, it may have been St Joseph’s Catholic Orphanage for Girls but the Senior Archivist and Curator of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea had no record of Kate having resided there. It is difficult to find records of children with disabilities during the nineteenth century. Indeed, disabled people of all ages are almost invisible in the public records before 1900.

⁹⁸ Suellen Murray, *Remembering, Honouring and Acknowledging Former Residents of Good Shepherd Homes: An Oral History Research Study* (Abbotsford: Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, 2020), 13.

⁹⁹ “Home of the Good Shepherd, Leederville Admissions, 1902–1963,” Extract from the Admission Books relating to Catherine Mary Hainey, emailed on request by the Heritage Support Worker, Home of the Good Shepherd, Abbotsford, Victoria, January 27, 2022, 3, 105, 113.

Fremantle Arts Centre). However, she soon left and was reported to have later said: ‘I would sooner sink out of sight altogether than go there. I suffered too much there before’.¹⁰⁰

In 1908, the federal Government introduced the Invalid Pension.¹⁰¹ Kate received a small pension of fifteen shillings a week because of her blindness. This was not enough to live on, and Kate supplemented her income by selling newspapers on the Fremantle streets, usually accompanied by a dog, as shown in figure 7. On a good week, Kate could earn seven shillings. At the time, she rented a room in Tuckfield Street near the Women’s Home, and had been receiving State Aid of provisions valued at four shillings and four pence per week. However, this was discontinued in 1920 without her being given a reason after an inspector had visited her rented room and announced that she was no longer entitled to this aid.¹⁰²



¹⁰⁰ “Old Kate Strikes Trouble Seeking a Haven,” *The Weekly Herald*, July 11, 1924, 2, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/257882897>.

¹⁰¹ National Museum of Australia, “1908: Legislation Introducing National Age and Invalid Pensions,” *Defining Moments*, Age and Invalid Pensions, accessed May 4, 2022, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/age-and-invalid-pensions>.

¹⁰² “Charity. Thy Name is -- Mud,” *The Fremantle Herald*, October 22, 1920, 4, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/256726690>.

Figure 7. Kate, with dog, selling newspapers in Market Street, Fremantle, 1923¹⁰³

Kate also occasionally sold streamers at the wharf for departing ships. During good times, Kate would sometimes have as many as eight local boys selling newspapers for her and, when she could afford it, would take the boys for a ride on the trams or for a picnic.¹⁰⁴ Often called ‘Auntie’, she was well known in Fremantle as a hard-working woman who was good-hearted and often went without so that she could help other women.¹⁰⁵ She frequently assisted women who had been abused or thrown out by their husbands by taking them home to her small room, sometimes with their large brood of children.¹⁰⁶ For example, a newspaper article on August 16, 1919 reported that Kate had taken in a local woman, and her seven children, who were fleeing from a violent husband.¹⁰⁷ She also loved dogs and would often take in strays.¹⁰⁸ However, times were hard in the 1920s and sometimes people would take advantage of her blindness to steal her newspaper earnings. Her stoic response was to say: ‘Thank God, I’m poor, but honest’.¹⁰⁹

Apart from her blindness, Kate had other health issues such as neuritis. By 1926, when she was forty-four, her health had deteriorated so much that she had to retire from selling newspapers and seek shelter at the Home for the Aged Blind in Victoria Park.¹¹⁰ Although she would have preferred to stay in Fremantle, Kate had previously lived at the Fremantle Poor House and had vowed she would never enter it again.¹¹¹ She did not stay long at the Home for the Aged Blind, and by 1929, was living in the Salvation Army Home in North Fremantle. An appeal was held to send her to Sydney on the *Karoola* to live with her brother Joseph and his wife and four children. Joseph had offered Kate a home but could not

¹⁰³ Abraham ‘Izzy’ Orloff, *Paper Lady, Katie, 1923*, 1923, photograph, State Library of Western Australia, 111720PD, https://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa_b2197804_1.

¹⁰⁴ “Just Kate,” *The Advertiser*, February 18, 1932, 2, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/255964115>. This newspaper article was written soon after her death.

¹⁰⁵ “Charity. Thy Name is -- Mud,” 4.

¹⁰⁶ “Just Kate,” 2.

¹⁰⁷ “Separation. Secured by Mrs. Scanlan,” *Daily News*, August 16, 1919, 3,

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/81338718/7976216>. Kate Hainey had taken Mrs. Scanlan and her seven children to her room out of charity as Mrs. Scanlan’s husband was assaulting her and refused to contribute towards the family’s keep.

¹⁰⁸ “Just Kate,” 2.

¹⁰⁹ “Just Kate,” 2.

¹¹⁰ “[Neuritis](#),” [Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary](#). Neuritis is a broad term used to describe various diseases involving the inflammation of a nerve or a group of nerves, resulting in pain, changes in sensations, weakness, numbness, paralysis or muscle wasting.

¹¹¹ “Australia’s Gateway: Caustic Comments – On Affairs at Fremantle,” *The Sunday Times*, April 11, 1926, 7, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/58239487/>.

afford to pay her fare to Sydney. Money was raised to cover her fare and she travelled to Sydney; however, this arrangement did not work out and Kate soon returned to Fremantle.¹¹²

Kate was known for being very strong-willed, and she sometimes had disagreements with newspaper providers. In 1930, she was sentenced to a month in Fremantle Prison for smashing the window of Shepherd's Newsagency in High Street. It seems there was an on-going argument regarding returns on newspapers. At the time, newspaper-sellers had to purchase the papers that they planned to sell and did not receive any credit on unsold papers. Kate denied the damages charge but as she was being taken away from the court by police constables, she yelled, 'When I come out, I will break more than windows; don't worry'.¹¹³

Kate died on February 13, 1932, aged forty-nine.¹¹⁴ It is interesting that despite being born and raised as a Catholic, and having spent some time at a Catholic Home, she was buried in the Salvation Army section of Fremantle Cemetery.

Employment Options for Women

In the 1890s, society deemed that a woman's place was in the home looking after her family, and women who worked outside the home were generally paid only half as much as men.¹¹⁵ The excuse given for these smaller wages was that women were expected to marry and so their position in the workforce was considered temporary.¹¹⁶ Women were also denied access to a living-wage in the belief that they were supported by men, forcing most women into dependent relationships.¹¹⁷

In Australia by the late 1800s, the average family comprised eight children, and mothers found it extremely difficult to also earn an independent income to help support their family. They tried to find work that could be done while still caring for their families, such as

¹¹² "An Appeal for Help," *The Sunday Times*, February 10, 1929, 7, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/58412747>.

¹¹³ "Screams in Court – 'Old Kate' Jailed – Window Smashing Case," *Daily News*, October 2, 1930, 1, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/79474624/7915923>.

¹¹⁴ "Fremantle Cemetery, Plot Salvation Army-Mon-J-0152, Memorial ID 213405064," Find a Grave, Fremantle, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/639483/fremantle-cemetery>.

¹¹⁵ Sally Kennedy, "Segregation for Integration: Women and Work in Factories and Shops in Western Australia During the Great Depression," *Studies in Western Australian History* 5 (1982): 42, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.8111421907>.

¹¹⁶ Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1975), 62–3.

¹¹⁷ Marilyn Lake, "The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context" in *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests The 1890s*, eds., Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, and Susan Sheridan (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 7.

taking in lodgers or other people's washing, cleaning houses or offices, doing piecework for the clothing industry or, in extreme cases, freelance prostitution.¹¹⁸ Many women took their children to work with them when possible. Cleaning women carried their babies in baskets and female beggars had their young children by their side. However, as women had sole responsibility for their children, the separation of work and home duties was not easy.

Most unsupported women with young children faced severe economic hardship because work was hard to find. These women often survived by taking in washing because it was work that could be carried out at home while caring for young children.¹¹⁹ Laundry was considered one of the most arduous chores in those days because it was physically demanding and labour-intensive work. However, washer-women competed not just with one another but also with the commercial laundries set up by charitable concerns.¹²⁰ Although factories and shops were starting to provide new jobs for women, these options were seldom suitable for mothers caring for small children. One man recollected that widows 'had to take in washing, boarders or go scrubbing, or grab the first man they could take hold of.'¹²¹

Assisted Immigrant Domestic Servants

There was a high demand for female domestic servants in nineteenth-century Western Australia, as well as a major imbalance of the sexes in the settler population. In 1870, there were four thousand more males than females in the colony. This was made worse in the 1880s and 1890s when large numbers of gold-seekers flooded into the state; by 1890, there were five unmarried males to every unmarried female over 18.¹²²

In 1849, the Government established an assisted immigrant program to bring single British women who were experienced in domestic work to the colony. British emigration programs were primarily designed to reduce the pressure of poverty within the British working class, and the majority of women who applied for this scheme were from impoverished backgrounds, often workhouses.¹²³ The first group of assisted immigrant

¹¹⁸ Lake, "The Politics of Respectability," 9.

¹¹⁹ Colonial Secretary's Office Minute Paper No. 1203/1892, State Records Office of Western Australia, quoted in Abbott and Chesney, "I am a Poor Woman," 24.

¹²⁰ O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison*, 98–9.

¹²¹ Interview with John Curran, December 2, 1988, quoted in Ruth Barton, "Without Welfare: Family Illness and Death 1900–1942," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 12 (1990): 118.

¹²² Brown, *The Merchant Princes*, 164.

¹²³ Jan Gothard, "Pity the Poor Immigrant': Assisted Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia," in *Poor Australian Migrants in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Eric Richards (Canberra: Highland Press, 1991), 97.

domestic servants, comprising twenty-one women mainly from workhouses and orphanages, arrived in Fremantle on the *Mary* in October 1849. They were soon employed by local families.¹²⁴ The following year, transportation of British convicts to Western Australia began, and almost ten thousand male convicts arrived over the next eighteen years.¹²⁵ Britain had agreed to sponsor an equal number of free immigrants to be sent to the colony, many of whom were single women employed as servants upon arrival.¹²⁶

The greatest demand was for general domestic servants with basic cooking skills. The women were required to be either single or widows without children, aged under thirty-five, and ‘sober, industrious, of good moral character and free from physical and mental defects.’¹²⁷ Single women with illegitimate children were considered ineligible for assisted passage because they were not deemed ‘of good moral character’.¹²⁸ Between 1860 and 1900, 1,700 single or widowed British women were granted assisted passage to Western Australia.¹²⁹ Domestic service employed almost half of the female workforce.¹³⁰ In 1901, there were 6,930 women employed in domestic work in Western Australia.¹³¹

Servant immigration to Western Australia peaked in the periods 1849–1863 and 1889–1901.¹³² Before 1863, most of the women were from Ireland, escaping conditions caused by the Irish Potato Famine.¹³³ However, anti-Irish sentiments in the mid-1860s led Governor Hampton to demand that only English or Scottish women, with experience as

¹²⁴ William Tanner, Letter to his mother, October 1831, in *The Tanner Letters: A Pioneer Saga of Swan River and Tasmania 1831-1845*, ed. Pamela Statham (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), 23.

¹²⁵ R. T. Appleyard, “Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth 1850-1914,” in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. C. T. Stannage (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), 213–4; I. H. Vanden Driesen, *Essays on Immigration Policy and Population in Western Australia 1850–1901* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1986), 49; Pamela Statham, “Why Convicts: Part 2: The Decision to Introduce Convicts to Swan River,” *Studies in Western Australian History* 4 (1981): 6.

¹²⁶ Vanden Driesen, *Essays on Immigration Policy*, 16–7, 24, 31; Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 29, 39.

¹²⁷ Gothard, *Blue China*, 22.

¹²⁸ Gothard, *Blue China*, 22.

¹²⁹ Gothard, *Blue China*, 2.

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Elliott, *Women, Class, and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788–1978* (Sydney: Fontana/Collins, 1980), 67; Stannage, *The People of Perth*, 193.

¹³¹ Gail Reekie, “With Ready Hands and New Brooms: The Women who Campaigned for Female Suffrage in Western Australia 1895–1899,” *Hecate* 7, no. 1 (1981): 25.

¹³² Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 66, 85; Gothard, *Blue China*, 79.

¹³³ Emily Chambers, “The Immigration of Domestic Servants to Western Australia in the 1850s and 1890s” (Honours diss., Murdoch University, 2017), 13. The Irish Potato Famine, also known as the Great Hunger, was a period of widespread starvation and disease in Ireland from 1845 to 1852.

servants, be given assisted fares. This resulted in predominantly English and Scottish women arriving from 1889 to 1901.¹³⁴

High unemployment probably encouraged poor women to migrate, as well as the diminished opportunities for marriage at a time when women outnumbered men in Britain.¹³⁵ Women may have been attracted by the availability of potential husbands among the high number of single men in Western Australia, as well as the relatively high wages compared to Britain in the mid- and late-nineteenth century.¹³⁶ Domestic service was often seen as a temporary arrangement before getting married; for most young women, the average time between arrival and marriage was three years.¹³⁷ Furthermore, domestic servants had a lower social status than married women, and many women came to Western Australia with the objective of advancing their circumstances through marriage.¹³⁸ At this time, employers constantly complained about servants leaving to marry because it meant having to find and train a new maid.¹³⁹ The success of the initial transport of domestic servants, combined with the need to continually replace servants when they left to marry, ensured that the immigration scheme continued and was expanded.¹⁴⁰

However, the scheme could not guarantee that all the immigrants were all of ‘good moral character’. Mrs. Edward Millett wrote in her reminiscences that ‘these girls were not always the respectable housekeepers and nursemaids their middle-class employers demanded’.¹⁴¹ She had travelled to Australia in 1863 with approximately sixty single women who were assisted immigrant domestic servants, and had noted that many appeared to be not

¹³⁴ Chambers, "The Immigration of Domestic Servants," 24. Governor John Hampton was appointed Governor of Western Australia in 1861. He arrived in the colony the following year, and immediately took far more direct control of Western Australia's convict establishment than had his predecessors.

¹³⁵ Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 3.

¹³⁶ Pauline Jackson, "Women in 19th Century Irish Emigration," *The International Migration Review* 18, no. 4 (1984): 1010–8, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2546070>; Vanden Driesen, *Essays on Immigration Policy*, 166.

¹³⁷ B. W. Higman, *Domestic Service in Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 260; "To the Editor," *The West Australian*, June 13, 1895, 6. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/4550484/811999>.

¹³⁸ Chambers, "The Immigration of Domestic Servants," 78.

¹³⁹ Katrina Alford, *Production or Reproduction: An Economic History of Women in Australia, 1788–1850* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1984), 175.

¹⁴⁰ Jan Gothard, "Wives or Workers? Single British Female Migration to Colonial Australia," in *Women, Gender and Labour Migration: Historical and Global Perspectives*, ed. Pamela Sharpe (London: Routledge, 2001), 150–1, 153–6.

¹⁴¹ Millett, *An Australian Parsonage*, 6.

long out of prison because they had ‘suspiciously short-cropped hair which appeared to be the result of the prison barber’.¹⁴²

For the women who immigrated, shipboard protective controls during the voyage limited their freedoms. Even on arrival, the hiring process favoured colonial employers at the expense of the servants. These restrictions on the immigrant women continued during their time in domestic service where the conditions of work and the fact that they lived-in made the female servants heavily dependent on their employers.¹⁴³ They were also socially distanced from and subordinate to their mistresses, a position which was supported by colonial laws at the time.¹⁴⁴ The fourth story in this thesis is a woman who came to Fremantle as part of this scheme, and her narrative below exemplifies some of the challenges faced by immigrant women at this time.

Emily Peacock¹⁴⁵

Emily Peacock was born in Wandsworth, London, in 1854 and worked as a domestic servant.¹⁴⁶ On May 13, 1877 at the age of nineteen, she departed Gravesend, England, on the *Daylight* as an assisted immigrant domestic servant and arrived in Fremantle on August 10. The seventy-five passengers, which included eighteen single female domestic servants, had all been required to give an undertaking to remain in the colony for at least three years.¹⁴⁷

Emily first worked in Fremantle as a domestic servant for the merchant John Simpson and his wife Jane (née Sutton). John Simpson had married Jane in Fremantle in 1845, and

¹⁴² Marian Aveling, ed., *Westralian Voices: Documents in Western Australian Social History* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1979); Millett, *An Australian Parsonage*, 299.

¹⁴³ Chambers, “The Immigration of Domestic Servants,” 79.

¹⁴⁴ Chambers, “The Immigration of Domestic Servants,” v.

¹⁴⁵ . Emily Peacock was born in 1858 and died on October 6, 1932. Parish Register. London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; *London Church of England Parish Registers*; Reference Number: P93/DUN/023. Western Australia, Crew and Passenger Lists, 1852-1930. Emily Peacock

¹⁴⁶ “Emily Peacock – Facts.”

¹⁴⁷ The Herald (Fremantle, WA; 18657-1886), Saturday 18th August 1877, Page 2, Master’s Report of Barque “Daylight” from London to Fremantle. The Western Australian Times (Perth, WA: 1874-1879), Friday 10th August 1877, page 3, Immigrants per Daylight. , ‘Letter from immigration agents, Felgate & Co. 12 Clements Lane, London to Colonial Secretary of Swan Colony (Western Australia). “The Daylight sailed from Gravesend on 13th May 1877 with 75 ‘souls’ equal to 68 statute adults, all of whom have signed to remain in the colony for three years. We were fortunate in obtaining 18 single women and trust they will turn out well, their papers having been all satisfactorily signed, but there is great difficulty in getting Domestic Servants to emigrate’. Western Australia, Crew and Passenger Lists, 1852-1930. SRO of Western Australia; Passenger lists showing ‘names of immigrants who have signed agreements to remain three years in the colony from date of landing’ and date of arrival.; Accession: 633; Roll: 212

they had both returned to England in 1847 during the economic depression.¹⁴⁸ With their two young children, they travelled back to Fremantle on the *Mary* in 1849 because convicts were about to be sent to Western Australia which was expected to improve business conditions in the colony.¹⁴⁹ The Simpsons were offered free passage on the *Mary*; he as guardian of Parkhurst boys during the voyage and she as matron in charge of the servant girls. Their cabin compartments overlooked the hatchway to the single women's quarters.¹⁵⁰

Emily worked for the Simpsons for approximately twelve months and then left their service when she received an offer of marriage.¹⁵¹ She travelled to Geraldton where she married shipwright Henry Brocklesby at the Dongara Anglican Church on August 16, 1878. She was twenty and Henry was thirty-four.¹⁵² Henry was an expirée, a convict whose time of penal servitude had expired. He had arrived in Fremantle on the *Corona* in December 1866, along with 305 other convicts.¹⁵³ Henry was in Geraldton because of the work opportunities provided by the construction of the Northampton railway. At that time, the Greenough district was the most prosperous agricultural area in the colony and the ports at Geraldton and Dongara were very busy. However, after only one week of marriage, Henry deserted Emily to join a ship's crew bound for London and never returned.¹⁵⁴

After Henry left, Emily found herself pregnant, and her daughter Queenie Kathleen was born in May, 1879.¹⁵⁵ Emily managed to support herself and her daughter by again doing domestic work and also taking in washing. For some time, she worked for Maria Edwards, a former shipmate from the *Daylight* who had married and was also living in Geraldton.¹⁵⁶

The Northampton railway was the first government railway constructed in Western Australia and was completed in 1879.¹⁵⁷ Its construction was a major source of employment

¹⁴⁸ "Western Australian Pioneer Index, 1841–1905," Australian Marriage Records, Registration Number 159, 1845, John Simpson and Jane Sutton, accessed September 26, 2021, <https://search.ancestry.com.au/cgi-bin/sse.dll?viewrecord=1&r=5544&db=AusMarrIndex&indiv=try&h=5609821>

¹⁴⁹ Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 5.

¹⁵⁰ Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 5.

¹⁵¹ Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 107.

¹⁵² Australia, Marriage Index, 1788-1950 Registration No. 4506. Accessed March 27, 2023.

¹⁵³ "Australian Convict Transportation Register," Henry Brocklesby, *Corona*, Australian Convict Transportation Registers – Other Fleets & Ships, 1791–1868, accessed September 26, 2021,

¹⁵⁴ Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 107.

¹⁵⁵ "Queenie Kathleen Brocklesby <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/213625824/queenie-kathleen-brocklesby>

¹⁵⁶ Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 107.

¹⁵⁷ John Joyce, ed., *Western Australia's First Government Railway, 1879–1957* (Bayswater: Australian Railway Historical Society, Western Australian Division, 1979). The Northampton railway line operated between 1879 and 1957 and ran from Geraldton via Northampton to Ajana.

in the region at the time. When it was completed, many now-unemployed railway labourers moved to Perth and Fremantle, and Emily moved along with them.¹⁵⁸ After initially returning to Fremantle, Emily then moved to York with Queenie where she married Ernest San Quay, a Chinese market gardener, on September 30, 1886 at the Holy Trinity Church in York.¹⁵⁹ Emily was twenty-eight and Ernest was twenty-five. There is no record of Emily receiving a divorce from Henry Brocklesby and when she married Ernest, she registered as Emily Peacock. It seems that Henry never returned to Western Australia and died in London in 1917.¹⁶⁰

The marriage between Emily and Ernest was unusual at the time because there was a great deal of prejudice against the Chinese. In 1901, only thirty of the four thousand Chinese in Western Australia were women.¹⁶¹ Despite this imbalance, racist beliefs at the time meant that intermarriage between Chinese men and white women was considered socially unacceptable.¹⁶²

After their marriage, Emily and Ernest moved with Queenie to Guildford where their son Herbert was born later in 1886.¹⁶³ It seems that Emily was heavily pregnant when she married Ernest. In 1903, the family moved to Dardanup and then to Bunbury in 1910. In the First World War, Herbert fought at Gallipoli and France, returning safely to live with his parents.¹⁶⁴ Emily died in Bunbury on October 6, 1932, aged seventy-four and is buried in Bunbury Cemetery.¹⁶⁵ Ernest died on January 29, 1935, also aged seventy-four, and is buried next to her.¹⁶⁶ In 1936, Herbert died and is buried in Karrakatta Cemetery.¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁸ Erickson, *The Bride Ships*, 107.

¹⁵⁹ "Marriage. San Quay–Peacock," *Daily News*, October 5, 1886, 3, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/76212695/7700871>.

¹⁶⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," General Register Office; United Kingdom; Volume: 1a; Page: 659. Henry Brocklesby.

¹⁶¹ Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, eds., *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 63.

¹⁶² Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations*, 67.

¹⁶³ "Australia, World War 1 Service Records, 1914–1920," Herbert San Quay (1886–1936), National Archives of Australia, accessed September 28, 2021; "First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers," B2355, 1914–1920, Canberra, accessed September 28, 2021

"Funeral Notices. Sanquay," *The West Australian*, February 27, 1936, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/32968648>.

¹⁶⁴ "Sanquay, Herbert," ANZAC Heroes, Great War 1914–1918, Bunbury–Wellington District Western Australia, accessed September 28, 2021, https://anzacheroes.com.au/anzac_heroes/sanquay-herbert/.

¹⁶⁵ "Obituary. Late Emily Sanquay," *South Western Times*, October 12, 1932, 1, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/252932378>.

¹⁶⁶ "Bunbury Cemetery, Cemetery Records, Sanquay," accessed September 28, 2021, <https://bunburycemetery.com.au/cemetery-records/>.

Interestingly, historical records for Emily after she married Ernest San Quay were much more difficult to find. This is probably because after marrying Ernest, she was considered Asian and so was no longer included in the conventional European records. Jan Ryan, in her book *She Lives With a Chinaman*, contends that a woman who married ‘into colour’ not only experienced social and political persecution, but was considered ‘orientalised’ and no longer a good mother and wife.¹⁶⁸ Non-British women, including Asians and Aboriginals, were also not entitled to the maternity allowance when it was introduced in 1912.¹⁶⁹

Women Who Turned to Crime Because of Poverty

The ‘gender contract’ is the unfair arrangement where women are offered community status and economic security if they conform to society expectations such as being ladylike, submissive behaviour and being family focussed.¹⁷⁰ In cases of extreme poverty, this is rarely the outcome. Poverty reduces the options in people’s lives, can devastate self-esteem and frequently causes women to become outcasts in their own society.¹⁷¹

In 1890, women had far fewer economic options than men because society expected them to be financially supported by either their fathers or husbands. This belief meant that women who had to earn their living often received inadequate wages on which to survive.¹⁷² Such low wages meant that it was very difficult for unsupported women to support their families and also the need to physically care for young children made it even harder to earn a adequate living.¹⁷³ Domestic service was the most common employment for women, but this

¹⁶⁷ “Herbert Sanquay, Find a Grave,” Find a Grave Index, Australia and New Zealand, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/213628861/herbert-sanquay>.

¹⁶⁸ Jan Ryan, “‘She Lives With a Chinaman’: Orient-ing ‘White’ Women in the Courts of Law,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 60 (1999):149, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443059909387462>.

¹⁶⁹ Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations*, 63.

¹⁷⁰ European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, *One Hundred Words for Equality: A Glossary of Terms on Equality Between Women and Men* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Commission, 1998), 13.

¹⁷¹ Pat Carlen, *Women, Crime and Poverty* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1988), 13.

¹⁷² Margaret Arnot, “Prostitution and the State in Victoria, 1890–1914” (Masters diss., University of Melbourne, 1986), vi.

¹⁷³ Tanya Evans, “The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia,” *Annales de démographie historique* 127, no. 1 (2014): 77, <https://doi.org/10.3917/adh.127.0073>.

usually meant low wages, hard work, often sexual harassment from male employers and little personal freedom.¹⁷⁴

Widowhood, desertion and single motherhood were common but community attitudes towards single mothers were often harsh and there was rarely any government support.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, for some women prostitution became the only way to survive and support their families. Sometimes married women also succumbed to prostitution because their husbands were unemployed and they needed to feed their families.¹⁷⁶ The Sisters of the Good Samaritan argued in 1848 that many of the women in their care, who had turned to prostitution to survive, had been ‘under the influence of want’.¹⁷⁷ This was still true during the time of this study.

Prostitutes were considered the antithesis of good women, and were often vilified by the community.¹⁷⁸ They were frequently shunned by society because prostitution was seen as a threat to the sacredness of marriage and as the ‘great social evil’.¹⁷⁹ However, at a time when women had few career choices, and were legally paid much less than men, sex work was often the only way that poor women could support their families, especially when they had young children to care for.¹⁸⁰ For many women, prostitution was about survival but it also offered a chance of a reasonable income. In 1878, two young domestic servants who were arrested for soliciting, told the policeman who arrested them that ‘their wages wouldn’t keep them in boots’ and that they were able to earn more from sex work on their nights off than working long hours in service.¹⁸¹ In 1900, the going rate for a prostitute at the lower end

¹⁷⁴ Raelene Frances, "The History of Female Prostitution in Australia," in *Sex Work and Sex Workers in Australia*, eds. R. Perkins, G. Prestage, R. Sharp, and F. Lovejoy (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1994): 34.

¹⁷⁵

Barbara Minchinton and Sarah Hayes, "Brothels and Sex Workers: Variety, Complexity and Change in Nineteenth-Century Little Lon, Melbourne," *Australian Historical Studies* 51, no. 2 (2020): 168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2020.1729825>.

¹⁷⁶ Arnot, "Prostitution and the State," 7.

¹⁷⁷ Mary de Sales Smith, (ed.), "Annals of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict, 1857–1938," (typeset 1968) quoted in Kellie Louise Toole, "'Innocence and Penitence Hand Clasped in Hand': Australian Catholic Refuges for Penitent Women," (Masters diss., University of Adelaide, 2010), 1. Sister Mary de Sales Smith compiled these annals in the 1930s and they were typeset in 1968. They are a compilation of letters, convent records and newspaper chippings with the Sister Smith's commendatory the primary sources. As part of her Masters research, Kellie Toole verified the nineteenth-century sources where possible and found them accurate. The quote in the thesis text comes from the Archives of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, NSW Institutions, House of the Good Shepherd, April 9, 1848.

¹⁷⁸ Arnot, "Prostitution and the State," 9.

¹⁷⁹ Straw, *The Petticoat Parade*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Arnot, "Prostitution and the State," 9.

¹⁸¹ Hayes and Minchinton, "Sex and the Sisterhood."

of the market, was two shillings and sixpence, which meant that she could easily earn more in a week than a experienced tailoress who usually only earned ten shillings a week.¹⁸²

However, women could be prosecuted under the *Police Act of 1892*. Prostitutes could be charged by police as vagrants or being 'idle and disorderly' which meant they had no lawful means of support; they were associating with thieves or 'common prostitutes' or they were behaving in an indecent manner. Repeat offenders could be charged as 'incorrigibles' or 'rogues and vagabonds'.¹⁸³

During a debate on the consequences of women's conditions of employment, the Third Australasian Catholic Congress in 1909 conceded that women's wages were so low that it was 'remarkable that so many women and girls did manage to lead respectable lives'.¹⁸⁴ Annie Golding, an activist, feminist, suffragist and teacher who was President of the Women's Progressive Association in Sydney from 1904, submitted a report entitled *The Industrial and Social Condition of Women in the Australian Commonwealth* to the Congress.¹⁸⁵ However, despite being an accomplished speaker, she was not permitted to deliver her own paper because she was a woman and a man was assigned to deliver the paper to the Congress.¹⁸⁶ This was a good example of the bias against women at this time.

During the nineteenth century, prostitutes comprised the largest category of female criminals. Many worked on the streets as a temporary measure while they struggled to make ends meet. Reverend Merrick, the chaplain of Millbank Prison in London, took an interest in the prostitutes that he met in the prison and found that over half of them were domestic servants. Many were widows. Although twenty percent were married, only six percent were still living with their husbands. Around eleven percent reported that they had been 'betrayed under the promise of marriage, then abandoned'.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Frances, "The History of Female Prostitution," 27; Elliott, *Women, Class, and History*, 88.

¹⁸³ Straw, *The Petticoat Parade*, 9.

¹⁸⁴ Annie Golding, "The Industrial and Social Condition of Women in the Australian Commonwealth," in *Proceedings of the Third Australasian Catholic Congress*, ed. Australasian Catholic Congress (Sydney: William Brooks, 1909), 287.

¹⁸⁵ "Annie Mackenzie Golding," HerStory, Women's Museum of Australia and Old Gaol Alice Springs, accessed November 2021, <https://wmoa.com.au/herstory-archive/golding-annie-mackenzie>. Annie Mackenzie Golding (1855–1934) lobbied for equal pay for women, and equal opportunity in the work force.

¹⁸⁶ Toole, "Innocence and Penitence," 65.

¹⁸⁷ Jennifer Newby, *Womens Lives: Researching Women's Social History 1800–1939* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Family History, 2011), 139.

In the early twentieth century, prostitutes often operated in their local communities.¹⁸⁸ Although prostitution was probably the only work for women which paid well, it had a high price. Prostitutes were exposed to the dangers of male violence, pregnancy and disease. They had no legal rights. When women were discovered to be working as prostitutes, they were usually outcast from society, labelled ‘deviant’ by the authorities and denied access to charitable aid. Ironically, the one line of work that could help impoverished women provide for their families, often resulted in their families being taken away.¹⁸⁹

Lilly Doyle was considered a common prostitute by Fremantle police in the early twentieth century and did not live in a way that was acceptable to the local community.¹⁹⁰ However she was also a local character, known for often singing loudly as she drunkenly walked the tramlines late at night in South Fremantle.¹⁹¹ Lilly Doyle was reputed to often live in the Smelters’ Camp in the sand-hills behind South Beach, although she is not recorded on the electoral roll as residing there. However, many people living in the camp deliberately chose not to be in the official records.

Born in Fremantle in 1867, Lilly was a notorious offender who often appeared in the Fremantle Police Court and was labelled by the local newspaper as ‘A Police Court Identity’. In March 1920, she was charged with creating a disturbance in public and for offences against good order, and jailed for three months in Fremantle Prison. It was her 159th court appearance.¹⁹² Lilly was a woman who did not fit Victorian ideals of respectability and who had a succession of court appearances and imprisonment. Women such as Lilly were regarded as a serious social threat in the early twentieth century.¹⁹³ The view of the Comptroller-General of Prisons was that the majority of women who had spent time in Fremantle Prison were 'of the most abandoned type ... for whom there was very little hope of regeneration'. He stated that he could see little point in training them for employment because

¹⁸⁸ Raelene Frances, *Selling Sex: A Hidden History of Prostitution* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2007), 22.

¹⁸⁹ Bruce Scates, "The Case of Clarinna Stringer: Strategic Options and the Household Economy in Late Nineteenth-Century Australia," in *Rebellious Families: Household Strategic and Collective Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Jan Kok (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 62.

¹⁹⁰ Leigh Straw, "Outcast Women: Crime, Gender and the Politics of Respectability in Fremantle, 1900 to 1939," *Studies in Western Australian History* 31 (2016): 82, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.160726454298830>.

¹⁹¹ Bill Marks, *The Fall of the Dice* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1991), 8–10.

¹⁹² "Fremantle Police Court. A Police Court Identity," *The West Australian*, March 17, 1920, 8, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/27677788/2748822>.

¹⁹³ Straw, "Outcast Women," 93.

they would ‘never be allowed into respectable homes to take up the positions for which they had been trained’.¹⁹⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how unsupported women and their children survived in Fremantle in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, despite being treated as second-class citizens. They were expected to be feminine and obedient to their husbands or fathers, but were considered intellectually inferior to men. At that time, women had few legal rights. If they worked outside the home, they were often denied an adequate wage to be financially independent. Sometimes, prostitution was their only option and this came with serious risks such as male violence, pregnancy, disease and imprisonment.

The life stories of three impoverished Fremantle women are analysed to explore how they survived without male or other family support during this time. A fourth story describes a domestic servant who had to re-build her life after being abandoned by her new husband. Although the stories of the four women differ, there are several common themes. The first is that all four women had to cope with unforgiving and discriminatory societal attitudes towards poverty and, in some cases, disability and non-European marriage. The second is that the wages and legal rights of these four women were far lower than of men, and options were limited to remedy the imbalance. The final theme is that each of these four women persevered with little external assistance from charities or the government, the topic of the next chapter.

¹⁹⁴ Comptroller-General of Prisons, “Letter from Comptroller-General of Prisons to the Under-Secretary Public Records Office, July 16, 1907,” AN 24, Acc 752, File 214, Appointment of Prison Gate Committee, State Records Office of Western Australia, Perth, quoted in Rita Farrell, “Dangerous Women: Constructions of Female Criminality in Western Australia 1915–1945.” (PhD diss., Murdoch University, 1997), 418.

Chapter Three: Assistance for Impoverished Women

*'Innocence and Penitence...'*¹

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, institutions were established by the colonial government and voluntary charitable societies to meet the visible needs of people unable to care for themselves. Although many institutions and programs were privately administered by charitable organisations, a large proportion of the funding was from the colonial government.² This chapter reviews the different institutions, mostly in the wider Perth area, that existed from 1890–1914. It analyses what assistance was available to impoverished women and children during this period, including Female Rescue Homes (such as the Poor House), orphanages and the Government Industrial School.

The government provided both indoor and outdoor relief. Outdoor relief was usually provided as food. However, before granting such assistance, the authorities thoroughly investigated each applicant's circumstances to ensure that the application was 'a deserving one'.³ There were concerns that providing assistance to unmarried mothers would encourage dependency as well as immorality.⁴ Governments and charitable societies generally directed their assistance to destitute individuals. However, they did not intervene to prevent destitution because it was generally believed that neither the State nor private charities should assist families in ways that might reduce their self-reliance and responsibility.⁵ In Western Australia in 1910, 797 women and 1,311 children were provided with outdoor relief or admitted to one of the institutions for the destitute.⁶

¹ Toole, "Innocence and Penitence," title page. The full quote is 'Innocence and penitence meet hand clasped in hand; every social barrier which so-called society would erect is swept away by the tide of all-conquering love, burning zeal for the salvation of souls.' It is from an address to the Second Australasian Catholic Congress in Melbourne in 1904 by Reverend Dean Phelan, the chaplain of the convent of the Good Shepherd in Abbotsford for four years, and refers to the support that 'virginal souls' could provide for their 'less fortunate sisters'. Reverend Dean Phelan, "Work of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Australasia," *Proceedings of the Second Australasian Catholic Congress* (1904), 302 quoted in Toole, "Innocence and Penitence," 32.

² Barton, "Without Welfare," 116.

³ James Longmore, "Report by the Superintendent of Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions, 1897," *Western Australian Votes and Proceedings of Parliament* 1 (1898): 5.

⁴ Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers," 73–9.

⁵ Barton, "Without Welfare," 2.

⁶ "Report for the Charities Department for the Year Ending 30 June 1910," quoted in Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 154.

Many women applying for charity were malnourished because they generally gave what little food they had to their children.⁷ Hunger and illness often went together. Consequently, the homes of the poor were often places of sickness because inadequate diet and lack of warm clothing lowered the residents' resistance to disease.⁸ However many women were reluctant to enter institutions such as the Poor House because they feared being separated from their children.

Superintendent of Poor Relief

The Superintendent of Poor Relief, also known as the Inspector of Charitable Institutions, was part of the Colonial Secretary's office.⁹ The Superintendent personally dealt with all applications for relief, and applications had to be approved by both he and the Colonial or Under Secretary.¹⁰ The Superintendent's office was commonly referred to as the Poor Relief Department. From January 1874 until March 1897, the position was held by William Dale who was considered efficient, hard-working and sympathetic to the plights of many women and children. However his judgements indicated a strong sense of moral righteousness and a belief that many women created their own problems and he was especially intolerant of alcoholism and prostitution.¹¹

Dale died in March 1897, aged fifty-nine, and in December 1897, James Longmore became the Superintendent. Longmore, who was known as a competent administrator and a strict disciplinarian, stressed from the outset that the main function of the department was to relieve only those who were actually destitute. This meant distinguishing the 'thrifless and unworthy' from the 'needy and unfortunate'.¹²

⁷ Magarey, Rowley, and Sheridan, eds., *Debutante Nation*, 43.

⁸ Magarey, Rowley, and Sheridan, eds., *Debutante Nation*, 43.

⁹ Debra Rosser and Cate O'Neill, "Western Australia – Organisation. Superintendent of Poor Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions (1874–1908)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified November 20, 2014, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00605b.htm>. This position was also known as:

- Charitable Institutions Department (1896)
- Poor Relief Department (1882 onwards)
- Superintendent of Poor Houses (1882–1889)
- Superintendent of Poor Relief (1890–1896)
- Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools (1899–1907)
- Superintendent of Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions (1898)

¹⁰ Abbott and Chesney, "I am a Poor Woman," 26.

¹¹ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 127.

¹² Abbott and Chesney, "I am a Poor Woman," 27.

The conditions of poor relief were set out in the Government Gazette. Destitution had to be satisfactorily proved by ‘reference to reliable sources’, it had to be shown that there were no relatives in the State able to provide support, and applicants in Perth had to apply personally to the office of Public Charities whereas those outside Perth had to apply to resident magistrates of their district.¹³

Female Rescue Homes

Female Rescue Homes were established with the aim of reforming ‘fallen women’ through a combination of hard work and prayer. Increasingly, these homes catered to single mothers and their babies and were based on Christian principles.¹⁴

The Female Home¹⁵

The Female Home, shown in figure 8, was established in 1851 on the corner of Murray and Pier Streets, Perth. It was originally known as the Servants’ Home, a short-term home for female servants between positions. Mrs Ellen Fitzgerald, the wife of the Governor, had taken a special interest in the plight of local women and extended the home’s role to include receiving immigrant servants awaiting a placement in the colony. It then became the Female Home, and accepted women and children who were destitute, pregnant women, wives of men in prison, and women whose husbands had abandoned them. First run by the Ladies' Friendly Society, the government had taken it over by the mid-1850s. Some destitute women sought

¹³ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 147.

¹⁴ Naomi Parry, “New South Wales - Glossary Term. Female Rescue Homes (1850–),” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified February 26, 2015, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00977b.htm>.

¹⁵ Debra Rosser, “Western Australia – Organisation. Female Home [Poor House, Perth] (1851–1909),” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified November 12, 2018, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01150b.htm>. This institution was also known as the:

- Poor House (1850s–1890s)
- Workhouse (1850s onwards)
- Female Home (1851–1890s)
- Immigrants' Home (1851–1866)
- Servants' Home (1851)
- Women's Poor House (1866–1890s)
- Government Maternity Home (1896–1897)
- Women's Home (1900–1909)

help at the Female Home for their lying-in where a maternity wing was set up in a separate building.¹⁶ This was probably the first lying-in home in the colony.¹⁷



Figure 8. The Female Home in Perth, 1899¹⁸

The first matron was Emily Annear who held the job for forty years. The mother of nine children, she was known for taking a genuine interest in the welfare of the women under her care.¹⁹ When she was appointed matron in 1862, the building served as the Poor House, Servants' Home and Immigration Depot. Under the regulations, the immigrants took precedence over paupers.²⁰ Mrs Annear was also highly regarded as a cook and provided

¹⁶ Anne Porter, "'A Mangle, Wringer, Bowl, Scissors, a Bible, and a Prayer Book': The House of Mercy Perth, 1890–1899," *Time Remembered* 2 (1978): 35. Lying-in refers to the period immediately before and after childbirth.

¹⁷ May Flanagan, "Lying-in (or Maternity) Homes in Western Australia From About 1860 to 1960," *Early Days* 11, 3 (1997): 339.

¹⁸ *The Women's Poor House in 1899*, 1899, photograph, Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 113.

¹⁹ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 46.

²⁰ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 46.

meals at Government House on special occasions.²¹ The Governor's wife, Mrs Fitzgerald, continued to be involved in the governance of the home and visited every week.²²

At the time, the law stated that biological fathers should provide financial support for illegitimate children. This led to a reluctance to allow an unmarried pregnant woman to enter the Female Home unless her expenses were paid by either her own father or the father of the expected child.²³ However, it was difficult to force a man to admit paternity, especially as the *Destitute Persons Ordinance Act* stated that 'no man shall be taken to be the father of an illegitimate child...upon the oath of the mother only'. This clause was eventually relaxed, allowing greater numbers of pregnant women to enter the Female Home.²⁴

In the 1860s, most applicants for admittance to the Female Home were women who were single, pregnant and destitute, and the majority of requests were from the Fremantle area.²⁵ At this time, entering the Female Home was usually the only way that impoverished women could obtain assistance with their confinements.²⁶ After 1854, children were also admitted, mostly with their mothers but also sometimes when a parent was in hospital or gaol. Others were orphans or had been removed from their families and generally had nowhere else to live until the first orphanages opened in 1868. During the 1890s, the poor economic situation in Western Australia resulted in an increasing number of deserted children brought to the Home by the police.²⁷

In his report of 1898, Longmore recorded that fifty-one percent of the women in the Home on December 31 that year were aged over sixty.²⁸ It is likely that elderly women were long-term residents whereas younger women, especially those with children, were more transient.²⁹ In 1899, ninety-six women and thirty-eight children were admitted to the Home and twenty-seven babies were born there.³⁰ According to Longmore, many of the inmates,

²¹ Judith Cohen, "Emily Hosking Annear," in *Material Women 99*, eds. Katie Hill and Margaret Ross (Perth: Curtin University of Technology, 1999).

²² "Governor Fitzgerald to Sir Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 14, 1854," *British Parliamentary Papers: Colonies 22*, quoted in Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 30.

²³ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 123.

²⁴ "Destitute Persons Relief Ordinance 1845," quoted in Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 15.

²⁵ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 59.

²⁶ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 59.

²⁷ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 142.

²⁸ James Longmore, "Report by the Superintendent of Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions, 1898," *Western Australian Votes and Proceedings of Parliament 1* (1899): 5.

²⁹ Abbott and Chesney, "I am a Poor Woman," 28.

³⁰ Abbott and Chesney, "I am a Poor Woman," 37.

especially the elderly inhabitants, were inclined to be ‘quarrelsome, spiteful and most ungrateful’.³¹

For many women, entry into the Female Home was their only option, either because they were destitute or they were regularly being abused by their husbands and had no other place to escape to.³² In November 1909, the Female Home in Perth closed and was re-established in Fremantle at what had been the Lunatic Asylum (now the Fremantle Arts Centre). Records show that very few children were admitted to the Home after its relocation, but it continued to function as a lying-in home for single and destitute women.³³ Kate Hainey briefly lived at the Female Home in 1912 but did not stay long, reportedly saying that she ‘would sooner sink out of sight altogether than live there’.³⁴

Life at the Female Home

As the Superintendent of Poor Relief wrote in his report to Parliament in 1902, the poor-houses were rendered as unattractive as possible to serve as a deterrent, in line with the English principle of ‘less eligibility’ as set out in the English Poor Law of 1834.³⁵ The regulations of the Female Home outlined the rules by which residents, some shown in figure 9, must live. Women were required to be ‘orderly and submissive in their behaviour, and to comply with every regulation.’³⁶ On admittance, they were required to wash with soap and water, given regulation clothing, and their details, such as the reason for admission, were written on a card which was hung at the foot of their bed.³⁷ Permission was required to venture outside or to receive visitors, although Ministers of Religion could visit daily. The daily timetable was rigid and residents were required to work for seven hours per day. Employment generally involved sewing mail bags and washing linen and garments for

³¹ James Longmore, “Report of the Superintendent of Public Charities, 1901,” *Western Australian Votes and Proceedings of Parliament* 2 (1902): 6.

³² Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 16.

³³ William Dale, “Report by the Superintendent of Poor Relief, 1895,” *Western Australian Votes and Proceedings of Parliament* 1 (1896): 3.

³⁴ “Old Kate Strikes Trouble,” 2.

³⁵ James Longmore, “Report of the Superintendent of Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions, 1902,” *Western Australian Votes and Proceedings of Parliament* 1 (1903); Michael E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 8. The British government policy of ‘less eligibility’ as legislated in the *Poor Law Amendment Act 1834* stated that conditions in workhouses had to be worse than the conditions available outside to deter people from claiming poor relief. This meant that an individual had to be destitute in order to qualify for poor relief.

³⁶ “The Perth Poor House: Regulations,” August 1877, Document 1.22, quoted in Aveling, *Westralian Voices*, 44.

³⁷ Aveling, *Westralian Voices*, 46.

Government offices and the hospital.³⁸ The diet was meticulously calculated and deliberately monotonous³⁹



Figure 9. Some of the residents of the Fremantle Female Home in 1924⁴⁰

‘Inmates’ who breached the rules could face solitary confinement on a diet of bread and water for up to three days, according to the *Poor Houses Discipline Act 1882*.⁴¹ In 1888, an amendment to this Act increased the severity of this punishment to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a period up to one month, as well as increasing the term of solitary confinement to a maximum of seven days.⁴² Under the new rules, inmates could be searched when entering the institution, and wards were inspected for cleanliness and tidiness during the day. Inmates were forbidden from remaining in the wards during the day unless they were ill. Being late for meals without a valid excuse meant that the offender went hungry. Except

³⁸ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 36

³⁹ Aveling, *Westralian Voices*, 44.

⁴⁰ *Inmates of the Womens' Home c1924*, 1924, photograph, Fremantle Library, Image No. 2819, PH 70409, <https://fremantle.spydus.com/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/ENQ/WPAC/ARCENQ?SETLVL=&RNI=70409>.

⁴¹ “Poor Houses Discipline Act, 1882, 46 Victoria, no. 8, Statutes, 1879-82, (1882),” Under the Poor House legislation, residents were referred to as ‘inmates’.

⁴² “Poor Houses Discipline Act, 1888, 52 Victoria, no.10, Statutes, 1888-91, (1888).”

on special occasions such as Christmas, inmates were denied gifts or treats; any gifts received by the women were confiscated at the discretion of the Superintendent.⁴³

Religious Institutions

Religious refuge homes began to emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially, these were for repentant women who were considered disgraced for not meeting society's standards of suitable female behaviour, such as working as a prostitute, becoming pregnant outside of marriage or engaging in unmarried sexual activities.⁴⁴ Eventually, the admittance rules of these homes were relaxed to also accept impoverished women needing care. Although the original purpose of these refuges for women was to meet their immediate material and spiritual needs, it was soon changed to 'indoctrinating the women with the ideals of feminine propriety and social usefulness'.⁴⁵

The House of Mercy⁴⁶

The House of Mercy was the first non-government Women's Rescue Home established in Perth. In 1890, the Reverend J. Young-Simpson, a Wesleyan minister, made an appeal to the ladies of Perth and Fremantle to work together to establish a refuge for unmarried mothers. A committee was formed and the House was established in Lake Street, Perth, for the 'shelter and reformation of women and girls who have fallen from virtue'. It accepted its first applicants in 1891 and was run by a private management committee with the Reverend Young-Simpson taking no further role in the organisation.⁴⁷

⁴³ James Longmore, "Report of the Superintendent of Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions, 1902," *Western Australian Votes and Proceedings of Parliament* 1 (1903) quoted in Abbott and Chesney, "I am a Poor Woman," 37; Cyril Jackson, "Letter from Cyril Jackson, Inspector General of Schools, to the Colonial Secretary, 1897," Colonial Secretary's Office, Perth: State Records Office of Western Australia, 1897.

⁴⁴ Toole, "Innocence and Penitence," i.

⁴⁵ Toole, "Innocence and Penitence," i.

⁴⁶ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. House of Mercy (1891–1916)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified June 20, 2014, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00350b.htm>. This institution was also known as the:

- House of Mercy (1891–1916)
- Alexandra Home for Women (1916–1950)
- Alexandra Home for Mothers and Babies (1950–1956)
- Ngala Mothercraft Home and Training Centre (from 1956–1989)
- Ngala Family Resource Centre (from 1989)

⁴⁷ Flanagan, "Lying-in (or Maternity) Homes," 341.

Its first matron was Mrs Armstrong, a lady who exercised ‘a real motherly care over the inmates’.⁴⁸ The House accepted women pregnant with their first child but not a second, so as not to encourage ‘repeat offenders’.⁴⁹ Pregnant women could be admitted at any time before the birth of their child and stay for nine months afterwards. This post-natal period was later reduced to six months, with the intention of ‘reforming’ the women.⁵⁰

At the House, women were trained in domestic work and expected to work in the commercial laundry, which was funded by these activities as well as by charitable donations.⁵¹ As in similar institutions, there were ‘House Rules’, shown in figure 10, that residents must obey. In 1894, the House of Mercy moved to Aberdeen Street and then, six years later, to Lincoln Street where it became the Alexandra Home for Women in 1916, shown in figure 11.⁵² In its early years, it mostly catered for young women who had been referred through child welfare, but married women could also have their babies at the Home, if they could afford to pay. In 1956 the organisation moved to South Perth and was renamed the Ngala Mothercraft Home.⁵³

⁴⁸ “House of Mercy. Report by Mr. Longmore,” *The West Australian*, September 23, 1899, 7, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3235586/781588>.

⁴⁹ Roberta Jull, *The Story of the Alexandra Home for Women* (Perth: R. S. Sampson, 1940), 2.

⁵⁰ Porter, “A Mangle, Wringer, Bowl,” 32.

⁵¹ Jean Lang, *The Open Door: A History of Loving Care for Families, House of Mercy-Alexandra Home-Ngala, 1890-1980* (Perth: Ngala Mothercraft Home & Training Centre, 1980), 51; Flanagan, “Lying-in (or Maternity) Homes,” 339–53.

⁵² Jull, *The Story of the Alexandra Home*, 51.

⁵³ Lang, *The Open Door*, 51.

West Australian House of Mercy.

HOUSE RULES.

1. There shall be family worship night and morning at which all the Inmates shall attend.
2. The special spiritual instruction of the Inmates shall be carried on by their respective Ministers.
3. Applicants on entering shall give up any money they may have to the Matron, to be taken care of by the Committee till they leave, or appropriated to their use if necessary.
4. The Matron is empowered to refuse admission to any Applicant whom she may suspect to be suffering from epidemic or contagious disease, reporting that she has done so to the Secretary at the earliest opportunity.
5. A certain percentage of the earnings of each Inmate (to be allotted at the pleasure of the Committee) shall be paid her when she leaves the House with the approval of the Committee.
6. Any Inmate who brings intoxicating liquors into the House shall be liable to immediate expulsion.
7. Any Inmate found intoxicated shall be reported forthwith by the Matron to the Secretary, who, with the concurrence of the Treasurer, is empowered to expel the offender from the House or to fine her in accordance with Rule 9.
8. The Matron shall have power to admit an Applicant if she thinks fit, and must report such admission as soon as possible to the Secretary, who shall confirm or reject the admission, reporting accordingly to the Committee.
9. All swearing and improper language is forbidden in the House. When the offence is persistently committed the Matron shall report the name of the offender to the Committee, who shall have the power to fine the offender in an amount not exceeding her earnings for that week in which the offence is committed.
10. The House Committee shall meet at the House of Mercy on the first Wednesday of every month to receive the Matron's report, and pass the accounts.
11. The House Committee are empowered to arrange all minor matters relating to details of the daily routine.
12. It is desirable that the Matron should preside at all meals.

By order of the Committee,

J. A. NISBET,

3rd February, 1892.

Hon. Secretary.

Figure 10. House of Mercy House Rules⁵⁴

⁵⁴ "West Australian House of Mercy. House Rules," quoted in "Ngala Annual Review 2019–2020," 16, accessed May 31, 2021, <https://www.ngala.com.au/ngalas-annual-review-2019-2020/>. Reproduced by permission of Dr Wendy Simpson, Coordinator, Research and Evaluation, Ngala.



Figure 11. The Alexandra Home for Women, 1928⁵⁵

In September 1906, a single woman named Elizabeth Booth gave birth to a baby, Ethel, at the House of Mercy. Upon leaving, she placed Ethel in the care of Alice Mitchell, a ‘baby farmer’. This term was used to describe someone who fostered (usually illegitimate) babies for a fee, and was somewhat derogatory because it implied uncaring treatment of the infants.⁵⁶ There was some truth to this implication because many of these babies died after being placed with a foster carer. The New South Wales Government Statistician, Sir Timothy Coghlan, reported on the large difference between the mortality rates of ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ babies in New South Wales, stating in his 1902 report that the death rate of illegitimate children was 241.4% higher than for legitimate children.⁵⁷ It can be expected that the statistics for Western Australia were similar. However, single mothers often had no option but to pay a baby farmer to care for their infant because the disgrace of being an

⁵⁵ *The Alexandra Home for Women in Lincoln-Street, North Perth, Founded over 30 Years Ago for the Care and Protection of Young Mothers*, 1928, photograph, “Home for Women,” *The West Australian*, February 14, 1928, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/32090732>.

⁵⁶ ⁵⁶ Stella Budrikis, *The Edward Street Baby Farm* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2020). 9.

‘Baby farming’ refers to the practice of taking custody of an infant for payment, particularly prevalent in the late Victorian era. Most of the infants were illegitimate and many died in the care of baby farmers.

⁵⁷ Evans, “The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers,” 87.

unmarried mother usually meant they had no family support and had to work to earn a living.⁵⁸

Baby Ethel died in the care of Alice Mitchell when she was five months old. It later was revealed in court that at least thirty-seven babies had died in Mitchell's care, and she was convicted of manslaughter and jailed for five years.⁵⁹ The case shocked the Perth and Fremantle communities, and stimulated wide public interest in child welfare reform in Western Australia. It led to the government passing several child protection laws as well as implementing the *State Children Act* in December 1907 with the stated purpose 'to make better provision for the Protection, Control, Maintenance and Reformation of Neglected and Destitute Children'.⁶⁰

The Salvation Army Home⁶¹

The Salvation Army Home for Neglected Girls was established in Claisebrook Road, East Perth, in 1894. It was set up by two female Salvation Army sisters, J. and H. Fuller, who had come to Western Australia from Melbourne and Adelaide for this purpose.⁶² In late 1895 the Home moved to Summers Street, East Perth and then moved again in 1898 to specially build premises in Lincoln Street, Highgate. The Lincoln Street premises, shown in figure 12, became the Cornelie Home which accommodated pregnant women, single mothers, women who had been released from prison and elderly women who had no other place to live.

⁵⁸ Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers," 73–9.

⁵⁹ Stella Budrikis, *The Edward Street Baby Farm* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2020).

⁶⁰ Flanagan, "Lying-in (or Maternity) Homes," 344.

⁶¹ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. Salvation Army Home for Neglected Girls, Perth (1894–1898)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified September 16, 2014,

<https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01154b.htm>. This institution was also known as:

- Salvation Army Home for Neglected Girls (1894–1898)
- Salvation Army Rescue Home
- Summer Street (1895–1898)
- Summer Street Rescue Home (1895–1898)
- Cornelie Home (1898–1903)
- Graceville Centre (1903)
- The Open Door (1903–1922)
- Dr Saw's Home (1904)
- Hopetoun (1916–1922)
- Hillcrest Maternity Home (1922–1974)

⁶² Rosser, "Salvation Army Home for Neglected Girls."



Figure 12. Cornelie Home, Highgate, 1903⁶³

In 1899, Mrs Shaw, the wife of the Captain of the Salvation Army, testified in court that she was prepared to take Marion Curedale into the Home to help reform her as a mother and prevent any more arrests for drunkenness.⁶⁴ Marion was a formerly respectable married woman who had been widowed after twenty-four years of marriage. When her husband died in 1887, she and her nine children were evicted from their home in Beaconsfield and Marion became an alcoholic. Soon afterwards, she was charged for the first time with drunkenness and disorderly conduct. From 1897 to 1909, Marion was imprisoned for over nine of the twelve years.⁶⁵ Marion met a violent end aged sixty-two when she was murdered on

⁶³ *Cornelie Home, exterior*, circa 1903, photograph, Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA, Cornelie Court Social Homes Closed File, accessed from “Western Australia – Photos Details. Image. Cornelie Home, exterior,” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified December 9, 2021, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/objects/WD0000735.htm>. This photograph is a digital copy of an item held in a lever-arch file labelled “Cornelie Court Social Homes Closed” at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. The item is an undated photocopy with 'Graceville' written on the caption. This implies that the photograph was taken after 1903, when Cornelie Home's name was changed to Graceville.

⁶⁴ “Fremantle Police Court. Monday, July 3,” *The West Australian*, July 4, 1899, 3, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3230065/765022>.

⁶⁵ Leigh Straw, *Drunks, Pests and Harlots: Criminal Women in Perth and Fremantle, 1900-1939* (Kilkerran: Humming Earth, 2013), 157; ‘Police Courts. Fremantle. A Hopeless Case,’ *The Inquirer and Commercial News*, February 19, 1897, 14, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/66526268>.

Christmas Day in 1909 on a yacht moored near Mill Point, South Perth.⁶⁶ It is not known why Marion was killed, but it is possible that she had turned to prostitution to survive and was attacked by a client.

In 1902, Magistrate Roe sent Clara Bull, who had been working as a prostitute, to the Salvation Army Home and told her it was a 'chance to be a better woman'.⁶⁷ Women such as Clara were often considered to be not so much bad women, as supposedly in need of moral re-programming.⁶⁸

Cornelie Home, built in Highgate on land provided by the Government, was a fifteen-room house established as a rescue home for women and also a maternity home for 'unmarried girls'. The residents were often single mothers, deserted wives, elderly, destitute or alcoholic women, or women who had recently been in prison,⁶⁹

In 1903 the maternity section was moved to North Fremantle and renamed 'The Open Door'. The name was selected because the Salvation Army wanted to 'open the door' to unwed mothers who were often rejected by society. The remaining Cornelie in Highgate changed its name to Graceville and remained a Rescue Home and also accepted women with intellectual disabilities.⁷⁰ In March 1922, Graceville was registered as an 'inebriates' home'.⁷¹

The Open Door maternity home, shown in figure 13, operated from 1903 to 1922 in Swan Street and was also known as 'Dr Saw's Home'. The government later resumed the site to build railway tracks to the North Wharf.⁷² The Open Door was originally founded for un-wed mothers but also provided maternity services for local women, with the married and single women accommodated in separate areas.⁷³ From 1911, the Home

⁶⁶ "Tragedy on the Swan. A Diabolical Murder. Woman's Body Horribly Mutilated. The Murderer Commits Suicide," *The West Australian*, December 25, 1909, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/26245727>.

⁶⁷ "A Chance to Reform. Salvation "Army" Rescue," *Daily News*, January 20, 1902, 2, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/80865220/7818228>.

⁶⁸ Straw, *Drunks, Pests and Harlots*, 196.

⁶⁹ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. Cornelie Home (1898–1903)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified November 12, 2018, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01153b.htm>.

⁷⁰ Rosser, "Cornelie Home."

⁷¹ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. Graceville Centre (1903–)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified November 12, 2018, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01310b.htm#related>.

⁷² Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. The Open Door (1903–1922)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified September 11, 2018, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01321b.htm>.

⁷³ Rosser, "The Open Door".

was also known as 'Hopetoun' and by 1919, 105 babies had been born there.⁷⁴ In 1922, the Home became 'Hillcrest Maternity Home' and moved to a donated property in Harvest Road North Fremantle.⁷⁵ Kate Hainey lived at the North Fremantle Home in Harvest Road briefly in 1929. In 2007 the original Cornelie Home in Highgate was demolished.⁷⁶



Figure 13. The Open Door, North Fremantle, 1906⁷⁷

The Home of the Good Shepherd

The Magdalen Home of the Good Shepherd, shown in figure 14, was a Catholic Rescue Home founded as a home for 'fallen women' and which operated from 1902 until 1979.⁷⁸ Matthew Gibney, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth, had been concerned at the large

⁷⁴ Rosser, "The Open Door."

⁷⁵ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. Hillcrest Maternity Home (1922–1974)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified October 22, 2014, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00096b.htm>.

⁷⁶ Rosser, "Cornelie Home."

⁷⁷ *Hopetoun North Fremantle*, 1906, photograph, Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA, Hillcrest photos, accessed from "Western Australia – Photos Details. Image. Hopetoun North Fremantle," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified December 9, 2021, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/objects/WD0000817.htm>. This photograph is a digital copy of an undated photocopy held in the Hillcrest photos file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA.

⁷⁸ "Magdalen", Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, accessed May 1, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/magdalen>. A Magdalen is a house of refuge or a reformatory for prostitutes. The name comes from Mary Magdalen.

number of women he considered to be living immoral lives after the discovery of gold in Western Australia.⁷⁹ He had advocated that a refuge near Perth was needed because the discovery of gold in the State had resulted in ‘an overwhelming majority of a male population and, in consequence, a great deal of depravity’.⁸⁰ The Home was originally located at 201 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, and housed twelve women. In September 1904, it was relocated to Ruislip Street, Leederville, where four sisters cared for twenty women.⁸¹



Figure 14. Home of the Good Shepherd 1911⁸²

The Home was originally established for released female prisoners who had been sent there by the Police Court for a two-year period of ‘reformation’. Between 1904 and 1909, 613 women entered the Home in Leederville; of those, forty-nine had been referred from the courts and eighty-one recently released from prison. Some of the women stayed for only four months.⁸³

⁷⁹ Toole, "Innocence and Penitence," 9; John O'Brien, "The Founding and Early Years of the Convent of the Good Shepherd, Leederville," *Studies in Western Australian History* 9 (1987): 46.

⁸⁰ O'Brien, "The Founding and Early Years," 46.

⁸¹ Geraldine Byrne, *Built on a Hilltop: A History of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Western Australia, 1902–2002* (Leederville: Sisters of the Good Shepherd, 2002), 47.

⁸² *The Home of the Good Shepherd Leederville*, 1911, photograph, *Western Mail*, March 4, 1911, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/38370520/3466758>.

⁸³ O'Brien, "The Founding and Early Years," 47.

The Home of the Good Shepherd also took in 'women at risk' and needing refuge. Ethel Cregan, aged eighteen, was sent there in 1912 after Fremantle police arrested her for theft and creating a disturbance. Reviewing the charges against her in court, the police recommended that the magistrate consider placing her in the Home to keep her away from undesirable influences in Fremantle.⁸⁴

In 1907, a woman named Vera Pearce, who had a long history of offending, including drunkenness and creating a disturbance in Fremantle, had been found near death and doctors believed she had taken poison. The Home of the Good Shepherd offered to accept her into their care and provide her with a refuge.⁸⁵ Three years later, Vera accused the police of being responsible for the death of her child after they had removed the child from her when she was drunk and placing the child in an orphanage. The child unfortunately died soon after.⁸⁶ Another of the Home's residents was May Ahern, who often made her living as a prostitute and was described by a magistrate as 'one of the worst female cases of this class'. She was sent to the Home in 1908 by Magistrate Roe in an attempt to reform her through 'strict religious guidance, work and moral reform'.⁸⁷

The women and girls earned their keep at the Home by working in the commercial laundry.⁸⁸ In 1908, the Government requested that the Good Shepherd nuns establish a reform school for girls, and this opened in Leederville the following year. Even before its official opening, the Children's Courts and the State Children's Department began to send young offenders and those considered in need to the Sisters.⁸⁹

The literature of the Home of the Good Shepherd called the women the 'children' of the Sisters and the clergy. The Practical Rules directed the Sisters to be guided by 'maternal devotedness' when dealing with their 'children'.⁹⁰ However, modern analysts interpret this not as an aim to provide women with supportive relationships but as a social control strategy of infantilisation. This meant treating the women as children so they would feel dependent on the Sisters and this dependency then reinforced when the women were discharged into the

⁸⁴ "Sent to the Home. Young Woman's Downfall," *Daily News*, April 4, 1912, 6, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/79891786/7805153>.

⁸⁵ "Criminal Court. April Sittings. Attempted Suicide," *The West Australian*, April 4, 1907, 3, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/25700047/2573533>.

⁸⁶ Straw, *Drunks, Pests and Harlots*, 179.

⁸⁷ Straw, *Drunks, Pests and Harlots*, 142.

⁸⁸ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 133.

⁸⁹ O'Brien, "The Founding and Early Years," 48.

⁹⁰ *Practical Rules for the Use of the Religious of the Good Shepherd for the Direction of the Classes* (Angers: France, 1898), 10, quoted in Toole, "Innocence and Penitence," 35.

care of their parents or an employer.⁹¹ It was common in Australian care facilities to refer to residents as children and deny them most adult responsibilities. This approach encouraged dependence and submission of the women.⁹²

The Home also had an orphanage school for younger girls. Its daily program, shown in Table 1, was highly regimented, interspersing prayers and hymn-singing with lessons and two periods of recreation.⁹³

Time	Activity
6.00	Rise, dress, make beds
6.30	Morning prayer
6.45	Breakfast
7.15	Mass
8.00	Talking whilst doing work
8.30	Silence, work continued
9.00	Reading
10.00	Grammar/geography/dictation
10.30	Writing
11.00	Arithmetic
11.30	Singing hymns, sewing
12.00	Dinner
12.30	Recreation
1.30	Singing hymns, silence, sewing
2.00	Lecture
2.30	Study
3.00	Sewing and other work
3.30	Talking whilst doing work
4.00	Religious instruction, catechism
4.30	Household work
5.45	Rosary
6.00	Supper
6.30	Recreation
8.00	Night prayers, retire to bed in silence

Table 1: Home of the Good Shepherd Daily Program⁹⁴

The Home remained a registered institution until 1979 when it closed and the buildings renovated to become the Catholic Education Office. The buildings are included on the State Heritage Register (Place No. 08880).⁹⁵

⁹¹ Toole, "'Innocence and Penitence'," 204; Linda Mahood, "The Magdalene's Friend: Prostitution and Social Control in Glasgow, 1869–1890," *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, 1–2 (1990): 55. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(90\)90073-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(90)90073-7).

⁹² Toole, "'Innocence and Penitence'," 204.

⁹³ Toole, "'Innocence and Penitence'," 215.

⁹⁴ Toole, "'Innocence and Penitence'," 215.

Since 1903, there have been accusations that Homes of the Good Shepherd have been places of cruelty and harsh labour with women working in sweat shop conditions for no wages.⁹⁶ The work was sometimes dangerous, and a newspaper article in December 1903 reported that it was common for women to suffer burns while working in the laundry.⁹⁷ Several enquiries have been held both in Australia and overseas into working conditions at the homes.⁹⁸ In 2017, a former resident spoke of her time working in the laundry of the Home of the Good Shepherd in Leederville in 1948 and described the working hours as long and the treatment “far from loving”.⁹⁹ It appears that conditions at the Home were little changed from the early 1900s.

⁹⁵ Debra Rosser, “Western Australia – Organisation. Home of the Good Shepherd Industrial School for Girls (1909–1979),” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified January 8, 2019, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00100b.htm>.

⁹⁶ “Judgement Against a Convent. Compensation for an Orphan,” *Kalgoorlie Miner*, March 5, 1903, 5, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/89061551>.

⁹⁷ “The Case of Emily Cresswell. Unfounded Charges Against a Convent,” *The West Australian*, December 23, 1903, 8, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/24840647>.

⁹⁸ “Fallen Women's Home. A Centre of Sweating,” *Sunday Times*, November 15, 1903, 5, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/57188077>. Senate Community Affairs Committee, 'Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care - Submissions received by the committee as at 17/3/05', in *Parliament of Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/submissions/sublist.

⁹⁹ Jacinta Cantatore, “Author Will Speak of Her Early Laundry Life,” *Harvey-Waroona Reporter*, October 26, 2017, <https://thewest.com.au/news/harvey-waroonareporter/author-will-speak-of-her-early-laundry-life-ng-b88631722z>

Orphanages

The establishment of orphanages coincided with the end of the convict system and its associated steady supply of free or cheap labour. The regulations under the *Industrial Schools Act 1874* reinforce that the orphanage system had its origins in the growing shortage of labour.¹⁰⁰ Most of these destitute children initially came from the Poor House. It was claimed that they would be assisted, given a basic education and trained to become a valuable part of the workforce. Although the desire to help these children was the main objective, their future value as servants was obviously also an important factor.¹⁰¹

It is estimated that, during the last century, more than half a million Australians were placed in institutions such as orphanages, industrial or training schools or homes. These institutions were administered by religious bodies, other charitable or welfare groups, or the State.¹⁰² The issues experienced in 1890–1914 persisted for many decades and in 2004, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee held an inquiry into alleged mistreatment of children in institution care. Although the inquiry focused on institutional care from the 1930s to 1970s, earlier time periods were also examined, including the period covered in this thesis. The Committee received hundreds of submissions from people who had experienced out-of-home care, most of them detailing the lack of love and affection received by the children. The report stated:

‘Anecdotal evidence has shown an abnormally large percentage of suicides among care leavers. Care leavers harbour powerful feelings of anger, guilt and shame; have a range of ongoing physical and mental health problems – often directly associated with beatings or lack of health care as a child; and struggle with employment and housing issues’.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Debra Rosser, “Western Australia – Legislation. Industrial Schools Act 1874 (1874–1893),” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified June 15, 2018, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00402b.htm>. The *Industrial Schools Act 1874* (1874/011) was the first comprehensive attempt at child welfare legislation in Western Australia. The Act served as a means to care for children who were identified as needy but also as a way to be able to punish young offenders by sending them to gaol. These separate functions led to further amendments, resulting in the *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1893*. Both Acts were repealed by the *State Children's Act 1907*.

¹⁰¹ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 88.

¹⁰² Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-Of-Home Care as Children* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004), xv.

¹⁰³ Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, xv.

Perth Girls' Orphanage¹⁰⁴

The Perth Girls' Orphanage, shown in figure 15, was established as the 'Protestant Orphanage' and opened on June 1, 1868, with seven girls and one boy. It operated from two cottages near the Causeway leading into Perth, and accepted children aged two to fourteen from all denominations. Many children came from the Poor House, as well as children whose parents could not afford to care for them. In 1882 the Orphanage moved to Adelaide Terrace, shown in figure 16.¹⁰⁵ The Orphanage remained in Perth until 1942, when due to the Second World War, the children and staff were evacuated to the Boys' Orphanage at Middle Swan and never returned to the Perth site.¹⁰⁶



Figure 15. Perth Girls' Orphanage, circa 1900¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. Perth Girls' Orphanage (1868–1942)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified November 28, 2014, <https://findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00176b.htm>. This institution was also known as:

- Perth Orphanage for Girls
- The Girls' Orphanage, Perth
- Protestant Orphanage
- Girls' Protestant Orphanage Industrial School
- Girls' Protestant Orphanage
- Orphanage Industrial School for Junior Protestant Girls, Perth
- Adelaide Terrace Orphanage, Perth, for Protestant Girls

¹⁰⁵ Rosser, "Perth Girls' Orphanage."

¹⁰⁶ Rosser, "Perth Girls' Orphanage."



Figure 16. Protestant Orphanage for Girls in Adelaide Terrace as it appeared in 1899 ¹⁰⁸

In November 1868, the orphanage housed eleven children. Its rules allowed admittance of children aged two to nine, and ‘honourable dismissal’ at ages twelve to fourteen ‘into service’. From the outset the Orphanage took in destitute children of any faith and from 1904 to 1935, 638 girls were admitted .¹⁰⁹ The Second Annual Report of the Protestant Orphanages stated that the institution was not solely designed as a safe home for children but also as a place for training competent and hard-working servants.¹¹⁰ In 1942, the Orphanage moved to Middle Swan and became part of Swan Homes.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Girls, Perth*, 1900, photograph, Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Report 1900, accessed from “Western Australia – Photos Details. Image. Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Girls, Perth,” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified December 9, 2021, <https://findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/objects/WD0000635.htm>. This photograph is a digital copy of an image on page twenty-one in the Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools for the year ending December 31, 1900.

¹⁰⁸ *Perth Girls’ Orphanage c1900*, 1899, photograph, Heritage Perth, posted April 11, 2014, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-11/girls-orphanage-conservation-c1900.jpg/5385148?nw=0>.

¹⁰⁹ Rosser, “Perth Girls’ Orphanage.”

¹¹⁰ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 88.

¹¹¹ Rosser, “Perth Girls’ Orphanage.”

St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls¹¹²

The Sisters of Mercy arrived in Perth in 1846 with the aim of providing education services for the ‘children of the colonists’.¹¹³ In 1868 they established St Joseph's Girls' Orphanage, shown in figure 17, which accepted girls up to sixteen years of age who were sent by government authorities or by private admissions.¹¹⁴ That year, eleven girls, carrying their belongings, walked approximately five hundred metres from the Poor House on the corner of Murray and Pier Streets, Perth, to live at the Sisters of Mercy Convent, adjacent to the Catholic pro-cathedral in Victoria Avenue.¹¹⁵ However by the end of the year, the convent had twenty-seven children and was running out of room and so a public appeal was set up which raised £1,400 for new premises which were completed in 1871. In 1901, the Orphanage moved to the site of the old Boys' Orphanage in Subiaco and became the St Joseph's Girls' Orphanage.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Debra Rosser, “Western Australia – Organisation. St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls (1868–1901),” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified July 2, 2020, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00878b.htm>. This institution was also known as:

- St Joseph's Roman Catholic Girls' Orphanage Industrial School
- Subiaco Orphanage Industrial School for Roman Catholic Girls
- Roman Catholic Girls' Orphanage
- Catholic Girls' Orphanage
- Victoria Square Orphanage
- Perth Roman Catholic Orphanage (Female)
- Orphanage Industrial School for Roman Catholic Girls
- Orphanage for Roman Catholic Girls
- Catherine McCauley Centre

¹¹³ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 89.

¹¹⁴ Martin Newbold, "The Sisters of Mercy, First Teaching Sisters in Australia," *Early Days* 7, 6 (1974): 26–34.

¹¹⁵ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 90.

¹¹⁶ Rosser, “St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls.”

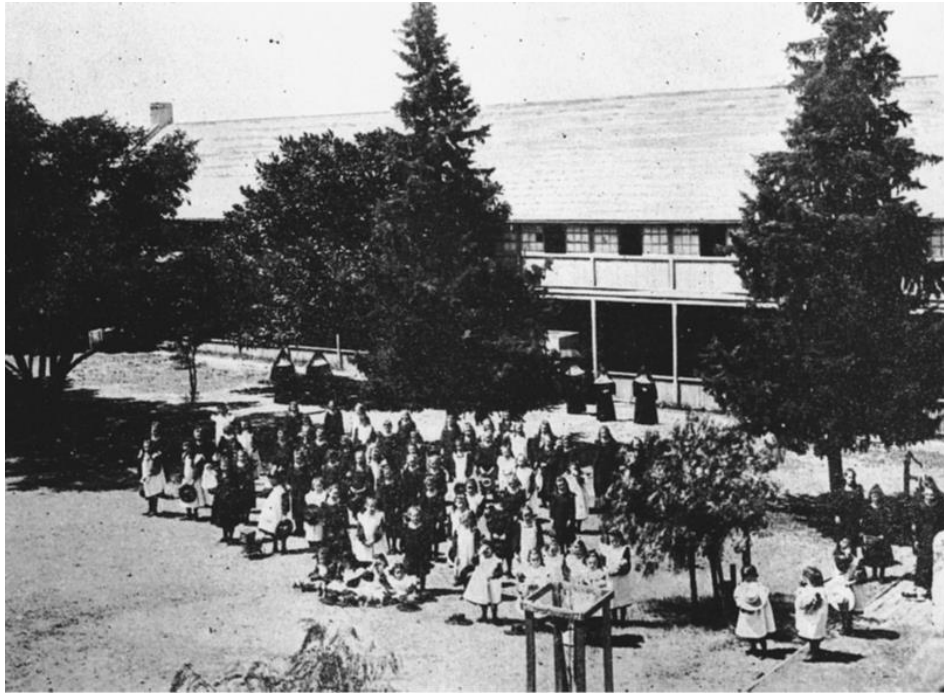


Figure 17. St Joseph's Roman Catholic Orphanage for Girls, 1899¹¹⁷

In 1879, the Inspector of Charitable Institutions reported that the girls at the Roman Catholic Orphanage were educated in the school attached to the Convent and were also instructed in 'household work, and other matters likely to be of use when placed out at service'. He went on to say that 'Several that have been sent out from this institution have been very favourably spoken of'.¹¹⁸ From the 1920s, working-age girls were often placed 'in service' with employers.¹¹⁹ The Orphanage closed in 1971 and became the Catherine McAuley Centre.¹²⁰

The 'Forgotten Australians' inquiry documented many reports of mistreatment at St Joseph's.¹²¹ Excerpts from some of the submissions to the inquiry are given here to illustrate the conditions experienced by residents. 'If any girls ran away, when they were caught they were publicly flogged. Us girls used to have tears in our eyes watching this, but we couldn't

¹¹⁷ *St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Orphanage for Girls*, 1899, photograph, "Report of the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools for the Year Ending 31 December 1900," *Western Australian Votes and Proceedings of Parliament* 1, 2 (1901), Paper No. 7 quoted in Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 89.

¹¹⁸ William Dale, "Report of the Inspector of Charitable Institutions – Number 263, Colonial Secretary's Office," *Government Gazette of Western Australia* 5 (1879): 26, <https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/gazettes1879.html>.

¹¹⁹ Rosser, "St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls."

¹²⁰ Rosser, "St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls."

¹²¹ Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, 72.

do anything.’¹²² ‘Nobody bothered to inquire why children continually ran away. Those who reported abuse as a reason for absconding, especially to police, were simply not believed and returned to the institution, usually to be summarily punished’.¹²³ ‘I was actually taken out of school for good at the age of thirteen to work in the laundry and the nursery and from then on my days were hell...The laundry was hard work having to use the big mangles and presses. A lot of us have osteo-arthritis today because of this work.’¹²⁴ ‘We were never allowed to keep the presents as the nuns used to take them off us when we got back to the orphanage and would sell them at their fetes.’¹²⁵ ‘When welfare came, you never told them about the beatings, etc, as you wouldn’t be believed and would just get flogged again. When welfare did come, they used to dress us up and give us shoes to put on. They would also put dolls on the beds and cloths on the tables in the dining room.’¹²⁶ ‘On a few occasions, the police would come to the orphanage if one of the girls died. I remember once when a baby had died and the police came – we were told what to say by the nuns, which meant lying.’¹²⁷

Perth Boys' Orphanage¹²⁸

A Protestant orphanage for boys was established on the same site as the Perth Girls' Orphanage on June 1, 1869, with the two orphanages separated by a 'five-foot high close-picket fence'.¹²⁹ Originally there were just four boys. In 1874, the Anglican Archdeacon, James Brown, oversaw construction of what came to be called Brown House at Middle Swan to provide a new establishment for boys. Two years later, the boys were transferred to the

¹²² Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, 102.

¹²³ Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, 103.

¹²⁴ Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, 113.

¹²⁵ Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, 88.

¹²⁶ Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, 131.

¹²⁷ Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, 122.

¹²⁸ Debra Rosser, “Perth Boys’ Orphanage (1869–1876),” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, created 3 September 2012, last modified November 28, 2014, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00804b.htm>. This institution was also known as:

- Swanleigh
- Swan Boys' Home
- Swan Protestant Orphanage Industrial School
- Swan Protestant Orphanage for Boys
- Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Junior Protestant Boys
- Swan Boys Orphanage

¹²⁹ Rosser, “Perth Boys’ Orphanage.”

new Swan Boys' Orphanage, shown in figure 18. Richard Roach Jewell, the Government Architect, designed the building as well as supervising its construction.¹³⁰



Figure 18. Swan Orphanage School for Protestant Boys 1900¹³¹

In 1942, due to the Second World War, girls who had been moved from the Perth Girls' Orphanage joined the boys and one year later the two orphanages were combined and became Swan Homes.

There have been numerous accusations of cruelty towards boys in care at the Perth Boys' Orphanage. In 1908, a series of articles was published by the *Sunday Times* describing severe discipline and brutal treatment of the orphanage boys. An internal inquiry was held by the Anglican Orphanage Committee into the claims in February 1908, however the inquiry's outcomes were dismissed as a whitewash.¹³² In April 1911, the Colonial Secretary ordered a inquiry into accusations of starvation of the boys, but this claim was also subsequently

¹³⁰ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 92.

¹³¹ *Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, Guildford [Middle Swan]*, 1900, photograph, Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Report 1900, accessed from "Western Australia – Photos Details. Image. Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, Guildford [Middle Swan]," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified December 9, 2021, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/objects/WD0000639.htm>.

¹³² "The Swan Boys' Coffinage. A Readied-Up 'Inquiry' and Its Results," *Sunday Times*, March 8, 1908, 5, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/57578265>.

dismissed.¹³³ A few months later, a coronial inquiry was held after the death of George Jones, a nine-year-old boy who lived at the orphanage. Evidence was given that the boys were 'under fed, insufficiently clothed and ill-treated'.¹³⁴ It was determined that George had died from toxaemia with his death hastened by 'gross negligence and lack of attention by the matron' who was consequently indicted for manslaughter.¹³⁵ The matron was found to be 'a person so callous in her disposition that she was totally unfit to have the care of children, more particularly of those deprived of parental affection and care'.¹³⁶ However, she was later acquitted.¹³⁷ The jury at the coronial inquiry also found that there was 'unsympathetic and unjust treatment of the boys and indiscriminate use of the cane and corporal punishment which was not justifiable'. Several of the staff were found to have mistreated boys in their control and the jury deemed them to be unfit for their positions.¹³⁸

During the coronial inquiry, the State Children's Department was also found to have been neglectful. The court recommended that 'an officer be appointed to inspect all charitable institutions under the control of the state and that they be regularly visited by a medical officer, a dentist, and an oculist'.¹³⁹ It appears that conditions at the orphanage gradually improved after this.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ "Swan Orphanage Management. Unfounded Statements," *Kalgoorlie Miner*, May 27, 1911, 8, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/90992304>.

¹³⁴ "Swan Orphanage. Death of George Jones," *Western Mail*, 22 July, 1911, 43, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/3474583>.

¹³⁵ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Event. Coronal Inquiry into the death of George Jones and the management of Swan Boys' Orphanage (1911)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified November 22, 2013, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01242b.htm>.

¹³⁶ Rosser, "Coronal Inquiry."

¹³⁷ "Matron Acquitted," *Evening Journal*, August 10, 1911, 4, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/22447118>.

¹³⁸ "Matron Acquitted."

¹³⁹ "Death of George Jones," 45, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/3474225>.

¹⁴⁰ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 108; "'The Daily News.' Orphans' Xmas Cheer Fund," *Daily News*, December 2, 1916, 10, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/81358001>.

Subiaco Boys' Orphanage¹⁴¹

The Subiaco Boys' Orphanage, shown in figures 19 and 20, was established by Matthew Gibney, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth, on February 13, 1872, in Subiaco and was run by the Benedictines from 1872 to 1876. In 1874, it was gazetted under the *Industrial Schools Act* and on November 22, 1897, the Christian Brothers took over its management.¹⁴²



Figure 19. Subiaco Orphanage for Roman Catholic Boys, 1900¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Debra Rosser, “Western Australia – Organisation. Subiaco Boys' Orphanage (1872–1901),” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified November 12, 2018, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00793b.htm>. This institution was also known as:

- St Vincent’s Boys' Orphanage (1872–1901)
- Subiaco Orphanage for Roman Catholic Boys (1897–)
- Clontarf Boys' Town
- St Joseph's Orphanage
- Clontarf Orphanage Industrial School for Junior Roman Catholic Boys
- Clontarf Orphanage Industrial School
- Clontarf Orphanage for Roman Catholic Boys, near Victoria Park

¹⁴² Rosser, “Subiaco Boys' Orphanage.”

¹⁴³ *Subiaco Orphanage Industrial School for Roman Catholic Boys*, 1900, photograph, Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Report 1900, accessed from “Western Australia – Photos Details. Image. Subiaco Orphanage Industrial School for Roman Catholic Boys,” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified December 9, 2021, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/objects/WD0000638.htm>.



Figure 20. Clontarf Orphanage Industrial School for Roman Catholic Boys, 1906¹⁴⁴

The admissions register recorded the admission of two boys, aged two and three years, in 1888. In 1901, the orphanage moved to Manning and was renamed Clontarf. Clontarf later accepted boys aged twelve to sixteen years from various backgrounds. These boys were usually wards of the State, orphans or admitted privately. Child migrants from Malta and Britain were also accepted from 1947 to 1966. Clontarf closed in 1983 and the site later became the Clontarf Aboriginal College.¹⁴⁵

In 2004, the ‘Forgotten Australians’ inquiry received submissions from men who had lived at Clontarf and other institutions run by the Christian Brothers in Western Australia. Many of these submissions described similar mistreatment of the residents. It was reported that ‘these institutions were totally devoid of love, had little compassion, and very little understanding of the needs of young boys. These were punishment regimes’.¹⁴⁶ In response to

¹⁴⁴ *Clontarf Orphanage Industrial School for Roman Catholic Boys, 1906*, 1906, photograph, Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Report 1906, accessed from “Western Australia – Photos Details. Image. Clontarf Orphanage Industrial School for Roman Catholic Boys, 1906,” Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children’s Homes and Other Institutions, last modified December 9, 2021, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/objects/WD0000648.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ Rosser, “Subiaco Boys’ Orphanage.”

¹⁴⁶ Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, *Forgotten Australians*, 105.

this report, the Christian Brothers issued a formal apology and offered funding for counselling and other support services for men who suffered in their institutions.¹⁴⁷

Government Industrial School¹⁴⁸

After the enactment of the *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1893*, a Government Industrial School was established. It was originally set up for young girls, but was soon accepting older girls and boys and also used as temporary accommodation for children whose parents were unable to care for them. The school moved to Subiaco in 1897 and many young destitute children, formerly residing in the Women's Home, were moved to the Government Industrial School.¹⁴⁹ By 1907, the words 'Industrial School' had been dropped from its title and replaced by 'Receiving Depot' as the main function became the temporary accommodation of children.¹⁵⁰

The Subiaco building, shown in figure 21, comprised a large entrance hall, an activity room, two sixteen-bed sleeping areas, two large dining rooms, and various kitchens, bathrooms and storerooms. There were also punishment cells in a separate building, however the original plans did not include a school room, and one of the kitchens needed to be transformed into a classroom before the school was opened.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. Clontarf (1901–1983)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified January 8, 2019, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00057b.htm#tab5>.

¹⁴⁸ Debra Rosser, "Western Australia – Organisation. Government Industrial School (1893–1907)," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified June 23, 2014, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01152b.htm>. This institution was also known as the:

- Government Industrial School and Receiving Depot
- Government Industrial School for Boys and Girls
- Government Industrial School and Receiving Depot for Boys and Girls

¹⁴⁹ James Longmore, *Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools* (Perth: Government Printer, 1899–1907), 16.

¹⁵⁰ Rosser, "Government Industrial School."

¹⁵¹ Emma Wynne, "Punishment Cells But No School Room, The Harsh Story of the Government Industrial School," posted January 27, 2015, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-01-27/history-government-industrial-school/6049008>.

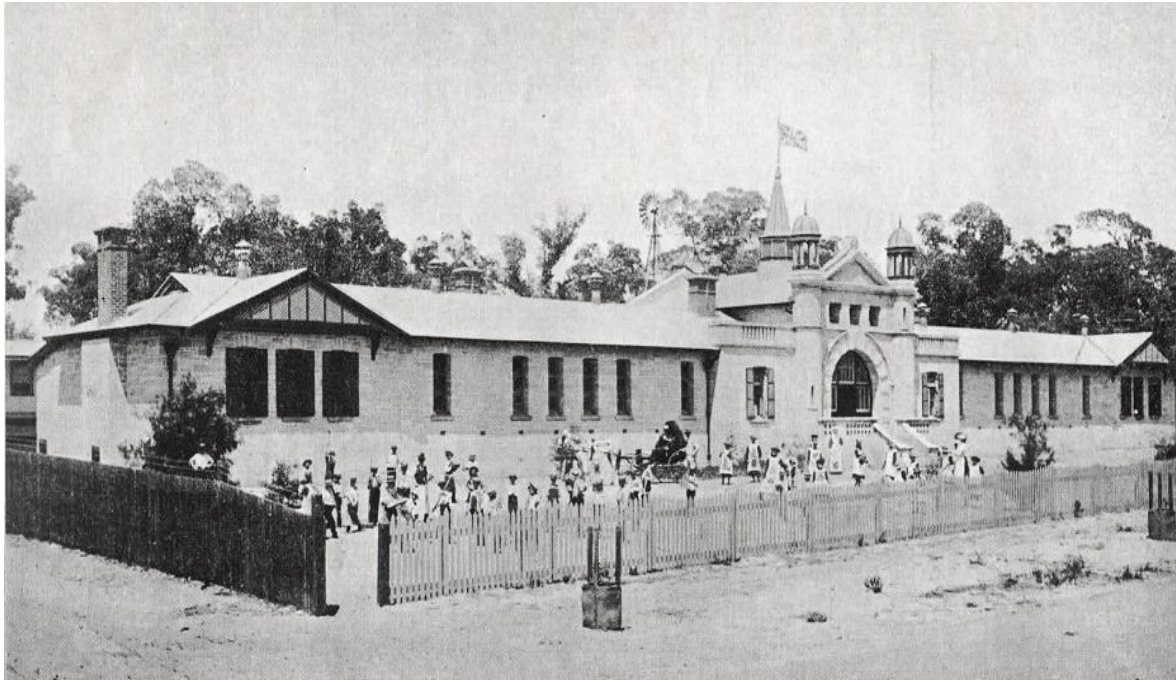


Figure 21. Government Industrial School for Boys and Girls, Subiaco, circa 1900¹⁵²

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated assistance available to impoverished women and children in the Fremantle area from 1890–1914. Much of this assistance was provided by various institutions that were established by the colonial government and voluntary charitable societies. Although these institutions were usually located in or near Perth, most of the women and children admitted were often from the Fremantle area.¹⁵³

Conditions in these homes and orphanages were often harsh, and there have been several damning inquiries into the unsympathetic treatment of women and children in these homes. Many submissions to these inquiries emphasise the long-lasting impacts of the strict regimes and harsh conditions on many of the institutions' residents, especially young children. However, impoverished women and children often had no choice but to seek

¹⁵² *Government Industrial School for Boys and Girls*, 1900, photograph, Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Report 1900, accessed from "Western Australia – Photos Details. Image. Government Industrial School for Boys and Girls," Find and Connect: History and Information about Australian Orphanages, Children's Homes and Other Institutions, last modified December 9, 2021, <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/objects/WD0000633.htm>.

¹⁵³ Hetherington, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Houses*, 59.

assistance. They usually only applied for admittance to these institutions when their situations had become desperate and there were few other options available.

Conclusion

*“When men are oppressed, it’s tragedy: When women are oppressed, it’s tradition”*¹

Amy Ingram was my great-grandmother and the inspiration for this research. I wanted to understand how poor women like Amy, who had been left to raise their children without financial support, managed to survive and bring up their children in the early days of Fremantle. When I started to investigate her story more closely, scattered fragments of the lives of other impoverished women came to light. I found that there were many women like Amy who struggled against what must have seemed insurmountable odds to keep their families together. Usually, the available records about these women were too sparse to be able to piece together enough information to help me understand the challenges that faced them. However, I was able to glean sufficient details of three other women to add to those that I had gathered about Amy. In this thesis, I have integrated these details into four stories about impoverished women and set them in context with background information on living conditions in Fremantle, prevailing social attitudes to poverty, the legal status of women, and the availability of institutional assistance for the period 1890–1914.

At that time, there was very little assistance available for impoverished women in Fremantle. Many women feared being separated from their children and seeing their families broken up if they sought help from institutions like the Female Home to survive. Amy did what most impoverished women had to do, cleaning houses and taking in washing to make ends meet. She worked very long hours to support her family. Many years later, her daughter Millie recorded her reminiscences of early life in Fremantle with her mother and brothers. This set of recollections, along with a large number of letters written by Amy’s eldest son Leo, provided further insights into Amy’s story. One common theme from this material is the description of Amy as a very strong and determined woman who was proud and iron-willed. These personal traits likely characterise many other women living in poverty who managed to raise families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in places like Fremantle.

Another common theme is the sparsity of information about impoverished women at this time. There are many women whose lives remain unknown because they were too proud to apply for assistance and so are not documented in the records. At that time, a strong stigma

¹ Bernadette Mosala, South African feminist, activist and member of the African Transformation Movement.

surrounded seeking assistance, particularly from the Poor House. Because of this, many women struggled in absolute poverty trying to support their children. Our understanding is further curtailed by the extremely scarce historical scholarship about how poor people, especially unsupported women, managed to survive during the early years of Fremantle. Impoverished women's stories and experiences are seldom considered a significant part of our history. However, knowing the ways that these women survived is crucial to understanding our early history, particularly within the context of the prevailing social attitudes and the legal status of women.

A third theme is the way that society treated disabled people, especially women at that time. When Kate Hainey was born in 1882, people with a disability were often hidden from society, and there was no financial support for families with a disabled child.² Orphaned at a young age and almost completely blind, Kate needed to make her own way in the world from when she was sixteen years old. She eventually moved to Fremantle with the aim of living an independent life. Although receiving a small pension because of her blindness, this was inadequate to live on and Kate survived by selling newspapers on the streets of Fremantle. In 2020, the State Library of Western Australia published an article which stated that "everyone in the Port knew Kate". This article had very few details but introduced me to Kate's story. Kate had also been mentioned in several newspaper articles during the early twentieth century, which provided further basic, although not always correct information. I was able to construct her story using websites like *Ancestry*, census records and information from various religious institutions such as the Home of the Good Shepherd where Kate had lived several times before she moved to Fremantle.

One piece of information from this research was that Kate often helped homeless women by taking them and their children back to her small rented room. This exemplifies a fourth theme about how poor women frequently helped each other when they could. As well as looking after young children to allow their mothers to go and work, they also provided crucial emotional support for each other. This mutual assistance was crucial at a time when there were few, if any, social support networks provided by the State or other agencies.

In addition to cleaning offices and homes, Lucy Bant also took in lodgers in her two-bedroom, rented terrace-house. This was a very common way of earning an income for

² Claire Rowe, "Media Release. Senses Australia Celebrates 120 Years," Senses Australia, last modified May 11, 2015, <https://www.senseswa.com.au/senses-australia-celebrates-120-years/>.

Fremantle women. Lucy's lodgers included Amy and her children for several years, and Millie's memoirs described her family boarding with Lucy and her family which gave me further valuable details of Lucy's life. Although Lucy was married, she received very little financial support from her alcoholic husband to raise her children. However, she remained married to him due to the social stigma of divorce. Thus, a fifth theme that emerges from my research is that prevailing social attitudes about marriage meant that many married women at that time were likely to be as poor as unmarried women if their husbands brought home little or no money. These women had to struggle to support themselves and their families but at least they had the social status of being married.

Two other themes emerging from my work are the importance of the assisted immigrant domestic servant scheme and the racist attitudes towards marriage of a European woman to a Chinese man. Emily Peacock had come to Fremantle as part of the assisted immigrant domestic servant scheme. At that time, many domestic servants came to Western Australia hoping to find husbands because of the large gender imbalance compared to Great Britain. The assisted immigrant domestic servant scheme was seen as a successful strategy to redress the imbalance and provide trained domestic servants to support the rapid growth in population and the economy due to the 1890s gold rushes.

Emily left service when offered marriage but was then deserted after only one week. She had been left pregnant and needing to support herself and her child. Eventually, she found security by marrying a Chinese man named Ernest San Quay, even though inter-racial marriages of European women to Chinese men were considered unthinkable at that time. Emily's story was pieced together from sources such as *Ancestry*, *Trove* and some secondary records. However, her story was much harder to trace after she married a Chinese man, probably because she was now considered 'Asian' and so was not included in the mainstream European records.

This study has examined the lives of four women as examples of how unsupported women survived in Fremantle from 1890 to 1914. The most common way to survive economically at that time was cleaning houses or offices, doing washing or working as a domestic servant. Three of the four women investigated made their living this way: Amy Ingram cleaned houses and did washing; Lucy Bant cleaned offices as well as taking in lodgers, and Emily Peacock worked as a domestic servant. Kate Hainey would not have been able to clean houses because of her blindness and instead earned a small amount selling

newspapers to supplement her meagre pension. Some women like Kate also took in homeless or abused women and their children, despite living in very small and basic accommodation themselves. Although these four women had different circumstances, they all had to fight for survival for themselves and their children.

These four women's lives probably mirrored those of countless other poor women at the time. It is likely that the living conditions and social attitudes faced by impoverished women and children in Fremantle were repeated in other port towns around the western world during this period. The appalling living conditions in the slum areas of Fremantle often led to serious health issues which impacted on women's struggle for survival. Denial of legal rights, and harsh community attitudes towards these women, exacerbated already difficult situations. Although institutions existed to assist impoverished women and children, their conditions were harsh and strong stigma surrounded seeking such assistance. Impoverished women often had no choice but to fight against almost overwhelming odds with fortitude and resilience to raise their families and build better lives for themselves and their children.

This thesis has answered the research question "How did unsupported women survive and support their children in Fremantle from 1890 to 1914", by addressing four related aims:

- Assess living conditions in Fremantle from 1890 to 1914, with particular attention to the poor, especially unsupported women and their children.
- Analyse the legal status and social expectations relating to women and how they were viewed by Fremantle society at this time.
- Discuss how unsupported women sustained themselves in Fremantle 1890 to 1914. and
- Investigate the types of assistance available to impoverished Fremantle women at the time.

These aims have been achieved through use of extant primary source material and including the stories of four women who reveal key aspects of what life in Fremantle was like for unsupported women. This thesis has focussed on an under-researched part of Fremantle's history and contributed new knowledge regarding impoverished women's lives in early Western Australian history.

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