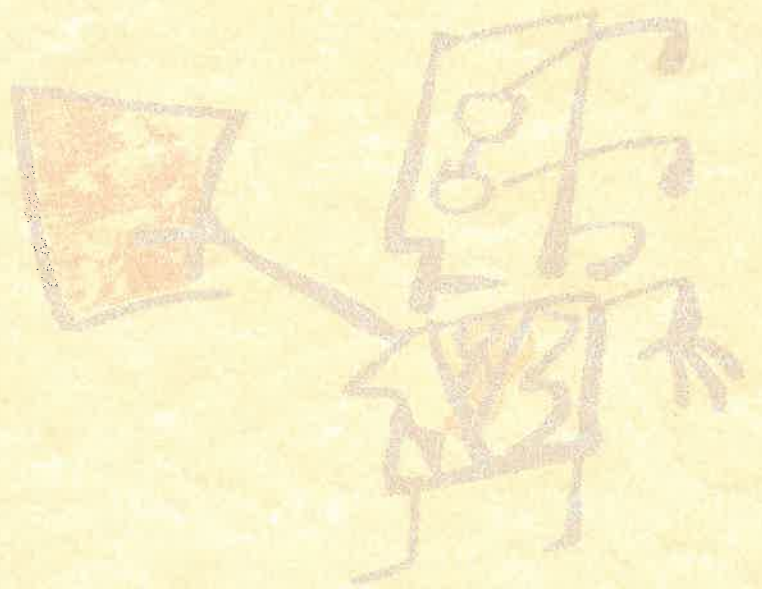


TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK LIBRARY
LOCAL STUDIES COLLECTION

History Competition

1999



"Recollections"

by Donald A. Munro

Town of Victoria Park
Local History Competition

Format 1

My family came to Victoria Park in 1926 and my father bought a house in Harvey St where I resided till 1950 except, for my years away in the second world war.

Being a lad of eight my memories of 1926 are few though I can still recall the big flood of that year when the Swan river broke it's banks and flooded all the low lying suburbs from Guildford to Fremantle and from what I can remember the worst hit suburbs were Guildford, Bassendean, and South Perth.

Victoria Park also had a fair share of the flood waters, Albany Hwy was under water from the Causeway to Rushton Rd which meant that all the adjoining Sts and properties like the Cargill St Primary School back to the river were under at least two feet of water.

It was not unusual to see children with home made canoes (made out of roofing iron and pitch) paddling around the streets.

The few cars at the time and horse drawn carts managed the flood and trams over the Causeway from Perth were still running.

The tram terminus in 26 was Duncan St, in later years the terminus was Mint St then Patricia St and then during the war years was taken to Welshpool Rd mainly to cater for the workers at the munitions factory in that area.

Remembering back to 1926 I recall there were a number of private residences in Albany Hwy, two I remember the Bartletts near Mackie St and Dr Peacocks Surgery on the corner of Manchester St.

The businesses at the time to my recollection, Gibb & Co Undertakers, Poytons grocery shop (opp the Town Hall) Bells Blacksmiths (where many an hour was spent watching him shoe horses) Ocbriens cake shop near Harvey St Ashbolts grocery on the corner of Duncan St, and Hearn Bros and Stead furniture showroom and factory which occupied a large area between Albany Hwy and Shepperton Rd.

I made mention earlier of the Victoria Park Town Hall that was where all school dances were held and of a Saturday night Mrs A. McGrath and her two sons had a band and played there for the local dance. Above the entrance going into the main part of the hall above the doorway was a Vickers Machine Gun a souvenir of the first World War, in the years following the second World War the hall was pulled down and I often wondered what had happened to that gun. The Town Hall was built in 1899.

In 1926 the Fire Brigade Station was on the corner of Leonard St the Post Office is still in the same place and though it's been altered over the years still has the same facade.

Further on along the Hwy the Police Station still looking the same today and further on again just before Salford St was the only Church I can remember in Albany Hwy it's the Salvation Army Church Hall.

There was only one Picture theatre and that was the Amusu it was opp the Police Stn and had a picture garden at the rear where many a pleasant night was spent watching the movies, sometimes it rained and a mad dash was made into the theatre to watch the end of whatever movie being shown.

When the Broadway theatre was built on the corner of Harper St in 1929 the Amusu was converted into a skating rink (roller skates) and I got a job of an evening as a skate boy; helping patrons put on and taking off their skates; I might have made on a average of only two shillings a night in those days though it was alot of money.

The Savoy movie theatre was built soon after the Broadway and both had a picture garden the Broadways was at the rear of it in Harper St while the Savoys garden was built on a block opp Sussex St this was in the

early thirties.

I could go on and on reminiscing each time I type a line I remember places I have forgotten, e.g. Reads chemist, Thoroughgood and Peet & Co, Estate Agents, the Memorial Gardens with a picket fence and hedge around it's boundries, the statue in the gardens of a first World war soldier holding a rifle which is now gone replaced by a cross. Sugar cane once grew where McMallum~~is~~ is now and on the other side of the Causeway in the direction of where the cement works once were Chinaman Charlie had a vegetable garden below Thoroughgood St. All that land in the years gone by has been reclaimed and Great Eastern Hwy now runs through what was a vegetable garden.

Heirisson Island east of the causeway once was a series of small islands each separated by a channel where barges would sail through to pick up shell from a dredge which was scooping it up from the bottom of the Swan river it was then carried to a landing below the cement works and once unloaded was transported by rail trucks to the cement works. The landing where the barges unloaded was near a small railway bridge known as the small Bunbury bridge.

In the early thirties boys of different groups we will call them gangs; of a weekend, if allowed would camp on one of the islands; each gang had it's own island, sometimes friendly fights would break out when one gang would raid another gangs island. It's what one would call living like the movies of Huckleberry finn or Tom Sawyer.

Not having a computer to correct my mistakes I'm trying my hand at typing; it's a one finger job so excuse all errors.

Back to the late twenties and early thirties, my first Sunday school was in the Salvation church hall and then when the Presbyterian church was built in Mint st being of that religion I with my brothers were sent there.

The Springs opposite the Maylands aerodrome in Rivervale was a favorite swimming place the main beach though on a Sunday outing for family groups was Como, sometimes it was that crowded to get a good spot on the beach the family on a hot Sunday would get to the beach around 9a.m. and even then find quite a large crowd.

Passengers travelling by train ~~from~~ from Perth to Armadale (or any of the stations between) if when the train was between the stations of Victoria Park or Carlisle and looking to the left they could see the tree-man. The trunk of what had been a tall tree was adorned with tin & painted to look like a man with a black coat and top hat the one existing branch was extended like an arm and had a sign hanging from it advertising land sales the sign I think was for the land agents Peet & Co it could be seen from quite a long distance away.

The tree-man was on the corner of Goddard & Staines Sts, I cleared the block it had been on for my first home in 1950 and remember digging and burning out a huge stump on the said block, I presume it was the stump of the tree-man as the stump was burnt on top, the tree man had been either burnt down or struck by lightning, thats only a guess I don't know the year it ceased to exist.

Being in my eightyfirst year I'm finding it hard to remember more except when the war broke out in 1939 I joined the A.I.F. and left W.A. in December of that year for N.S.W's and apart from a short stay in W.A. in 1940 I did not return to the West and Victoria Park until August 1945.

On my return home I noticed there had been a lot of changes in the Victoria Park area and in the following years up to the present time the whole facade has changed.

Most of my thoughts have been about the bottom end of the Park as children we did not have much to do with the top end except maybe a visit to the East Victoria Park Primary School when they held a concert or such.

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In 1926 dad bought our house in Harvey St for five hundred pounds, not having the cash in those days he paid a deposit of a few pounds the rest to be paid over a few years how much I did not know; dad even though he had a job (he was a policeman) with a wife and six boys to look after he found the repayments hard (mainly during the depression years) yet he managed it and lived in that house till he passed away in 1971. A block of land along Albany Hwy in the twenties cost around twelve pounds that was for a quarter acre block.

The State Saw Mills which became Westply (and at the present time is now being demolished) was on the corner of Gresham & Kitchener Sts was built around 1928 and as a boy I often called there for scraps of wood to make things, a couple of men I knew who worked there would now and then give me a hessian bag of wood for the home fire.

Another place I had occasion to visit when it was my turn was the Red Castle Brewery in Rivervale (now the Red Castle Motel) in the late twenties and early thirties our mother would send one of her sons to the brewery with a jar to get some yeast for a few pence, she would use it to make a good brew of ginger beer.

Some of us oldies still talk of the dances held in the Soldiers Memorial Hall Carlisle on the Cr of Memorial Ave & Rutland Ave opposite the Carlisle railway Stn. Being away at the war I don't know the year it was demolished. It is now replaced by a new hall built in 1969.

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So ends my memories of the past early years.

TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK
LOCAL HISTORY COMPETITION

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