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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BULLETIN

6/9 Austral Street,
KOGARAH 2217

Sept
~~August~~, 1987

Dear Friend and member,

The September Meeting will be held as follows:

Date Friday, 18th September, 1987 at 8.00 p.m.
Place Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale
Business General
Syllabus Item "Potted" History of the NSW Railways, Historical Buildings, Bridges. Peter Sage, whom you all know very well, will be our Guest Speaker and will keep you interested and entertained.

Supper Roster CAPTAIN - MRS SAMUELSON and helper, Mrs Longhurst

LADIES PLEASE BRING A PLATE

Supper time is a most enjoyable meeting time and allows you to talk with our Speaker and each other.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President and Research
Officer

Mrs J. Price,
Minute Secretary

Mrs B. Perkins,
Secretary and
Publicity Officer

587 1159

587 7407

587 9164

Treasurer ???

Miss D. Row,
Asst. Treasurer

Mrs E. Eardley,
Bulletin Editor

599 4884

59 8078

May I come in and say hello and stay for just awhile?
For in our hurry-hurry world it is almost out of style.
But sometimes the heart feels lighter when you're sad or sick or blue,
And the day seems so much brighter because someone thinks of you.
I hope that through this little chat, as I journey on my way,
I've left some rays of sunshine scattered along the way.

Annie Laurie Dunaway

A cheerio to our friends who are not so well. A special cheerio to Mr. Price who is in hospital and Mrs Wright. Our best wishes to all for a speedy recovery.

SPECIAL NOTICE

ALL BOOKS NOW AVAILABLE

The St.George Historical Society is pleased to announce that the following books, Nos.1-7 written and illustrated by the late Gifford H. Eardley for the Society, have been reprinted and are now available. Book Nos. 8, 9 and 10 have been compiled by Mrs Bronwyn Perkins.

| | | |
|-------|---|------------------|
| No.1 | "The Wolli Creek Valley" | Book Nos. 1-8 |
| No.2 | "Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway" | \$2.50 each plus |
| No.3 | "Saywells Tramway - Rockdale to Lady Robinsons Beach" | postage |
| No.4 | "Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway" | |
| No.5 | "Our Heritage in Stone" | |
| No.6 | "All Stations to Como" | |
| No.7 | "Tempe and the Black Creek Valley" | |
| No.8 | "Early Churches of the St.George District" | |
| No.9 | "Early Settlers of the St.George District Volume 1" | Book Nos.9-10 |
| No.10 | "Early Settlers of the St.George District Volume 2" | \$4.00 each plus |
| | | postage |

ALL BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT OUR MEETING, ALSO MEMBERS BADGES

For your copy of the above books, please contact one of the following:

| | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Miss B. Otton | 59 4259 (after 8 p.m.) |
| Mrs E. Eardley | 59 8078 |
| Mr. A. Ellis | 587 1159 |

NEW MEMBERS AND VISITORS ARE WELCOME

Have you volunteered for the Supper Roster? More help is needed!!!

2NBC-FM 90.1 - ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1987 - Tuesday evenings - 6.30p.m. - 6.45p.m.

- Tape 218 - 11th August - Sesquicentenary of Wm. Grant Broughton. - C. Wilding
- Tape 219 - 18th August - Loftus Junction & Tarzans Grip. - H. Loring
- Tape 220 - 25th August - Wm. Grant Broughton - C. Wilding
- Tape 221 - 1st September - Historical 1sts Railway etc. - H. Loring
- Tape 222 - 8th September - First Wool Clippers Bridge etc. - C. Turner
- Tape 223 - 15th September - 1st Gas Supply, Graving Dock, Naval Base - C. Turner
- Tape 224 - 22nd September - 1st Empire Games Aust, Air Force etc. - D. Sinclair
- Tape 225 - 29th September - 1st Aust. Motor Industry Jacaranda Festival etc. - D. Sinclair
- Tape 226 - 6th October - 1st Settlement Victoria South Aust & West Aust. - C. Turner
- Tape 227 - 13th October - 1st. Settlement Tasmania Overland Cape York & 1st to the Centre. - C. Turner
- Tape 228 - 20th October - 1st. N.T. Port, Settlement Q'ld, 1st Lighthouse etc. - D. Sinclair
- Tape 229 - 27th October - 1st University, Public School & Pub. Library. - D. Sinclair

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FORT STREET SCHOOL WAS SO SELECTIVE EVEN THE TEACHERS
HAD TO SIT FOR EXAMS ---

- Good Weekend
Sydney Morning Herald
28th February 1987

"Nation Trust Centre - This building was constructed in 1815 as a military hospital. It was enlarged in 1849 as the first model school of the Board of National Education and it continued to serve as Fort Street School until 1974.

R.A.H.S. 28"

The building that became "The School on the Hill" has played three roles in the development of N.S.W. from colony to State.

It was built as a Military Hospital, converted to a Model School then restored 126 years later to be the home for the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

The site for the Military Hospital was chosen because of its proximity to the Military Barracks in George Street. Its patients were often the soldiers who had been flogged nearly to death for insubordination.

Designed for Governor Macquarie by his aide-de-camp, Lt. John Watts, it was completed in 1815 for "the accommodation of 100 patients". Watts had trained as an architect in Ireland before serving in the British Army in the West Indies. And this "colonial" influence was apparent in his use of double storeyed verandahs. The two main entrances, one facing east, the other west, would allow a cool current of air to circulate the wards on humid Sydney summer days.

Its location, known as The Rocks, was a rowdy area renowned for its taverns: The Whalers Arms, the Three Jolly Sailors and The Sheer Hulk.

But the colonists had children and the Governors were concerned about providing for their education.

The children of the upper classes had both education and options: a tutor or governess at home or one of Sydney's private schools. But for the remainder, elementary schools were available run by the Churches.

In 1848 Governor FitzRoy set up a Board of National Education.

The Board's aim: "equal opportunity of education to all colonists, independent of rank, class or description of persons".

Their first school to be opened was in the old Military Hospital.

With the occupation of the Victoria Barracks at Paddington in 1848 by the garrison, the Military Hospital was vacated.

£1,100 was allocated by the Government to alter the building for school purposes. The school was opened in 1849. It was intended to be a model school - a model in organisation, instruction and discipline - where pupil teachers might receive some of their training.

Teachers were at first imported from model schools in England and Ireland to help train local teachers.

In 1851, William Wilkins arrived as headmaster only to find that the School was..."defective in organisation, in discipline, and in the methods of teaching employed".

Within a year the Board considered that the School had improved sufficiently "to fully justify its title of model school".

Wilkins recommended that pupil or trainee teachers appointed to other schools in the colony should attend Fort Street for a month "to qualify subsequently for a permanent position". The Fort Street ethos had begun.

In 1859 eligible candidates for teaching were retained in training for 3 months. They had to be "...at least 13 years of age and free from any bodily infirmity". They would then serve for up to 4 years as assistants.

The success of the Board's model school was striking. Soon all teachers applying for appointments to schools had to give test lessons at Fort Street on Saturday mornings.

By 1895 the school had a total enrolment of 2,000 (1,000 boys and 650 girls and 350 infants).

By the turn of the 20th century, Fort Street was several schools in one. A Teacher Training School - A Kindergarten Modern School - A Superior School - A Boys' School and Girls' School - Even a Technical School and Domestic School. But overall it was a selective school, true to the dedication of its founders.

In 1916, the Boys' School was moved to Taverner's Hill, Petersham, leaving Fort Street, Observatory Hill, for the girls.

In 1974, the Girls' School also moved to Petersham to form a single school.

From each site the School has produced some of the nation's most worthwhile contributors:- Sir Garfield Barwick - Clive and H.V. Evatt - Harry Hopman - Dr Phyllis Kabery - Betty McKinnon - Joy Nicholls - Sir Norman Rydge - Sir Percy Spender - Neville Wran - to name just a few.

Since 1975 the Military Hospital that spawned a model school has been home to the National Trust. The Trust's Ervin Gallery commemorates a lesser-known but most generous Australian: Harry Ervin grew up in Mosman and was fascinated by such artists as Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts who camped and painted at Sirius Cove. He bought their paintings and became their friend. He was a noble benefactor who gave a substantial sum of money to assist the conversion and restoration of the Military Hospital that became a school, into an administrative centre and art gallery for the National Trust. Today the Trust has an appropriate home, linking it with Sydney's colonial past.

Fort Street School motto:- Every man is the maker of his own fortune. "Faber est quisque suae fortunae".

200 YEARS AGO YOU COULD HAVE SAILED UP PITT STREET ---

- Good Weekend
 Sydney Morning Herald
 14th September 1985.

"The Tankstream - The stream that was Sydney's first water supply still runs beneath this place. Tanks excavated as resevoirs in 1791-1792 in the bedrock in this area gave the stream its name.

-R.A.H.S 7"

The "Tank Stream" plaque is one of a series of historical plaques sponsored by the Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney City Council and State Bank of New South Wales.

On a certain, somewhat significant day in 1788, the main attraction of Sydney Cove to the first British visitors was not the clean white sand shores - it was, in fact, the "fine stream of fresh water" that flowed through the bush behind the cove.

The stream, lined with swamp mahoganies, salt-water swamp oaks, orchids, wattles, vines and ferns was an ideal source of drinking water most necessary for a new settlement. It originated in marshy ground from the area of the present Hyde Park and flowed in a defined channel from King Street, between Pitt and George Streets. Although rather narrow, it was actually navigable at high tide as far up as what is now Bridge Street.

As the settlement developed, the stream became a natural division for the settlement. At the earliest stages, most of the convicts were situted on the east side in a small valley between Grosvenor and Essex Streets. On the other side was the marine detachment, the female convict camps, and the remaining "better class" of convicts.

The bush was cleared. The settlement formed. And the problems began. A serious drought between 1788 and 1790 drastically reduced the flow of drinking water from the stream. So a worried Governor Phillip ordered "the stone mason gang to cut tanks in the rock as reservoirs". Those tanks finally gave the "fine stream of fresh water" a name - "The Tank Stream". Still the settlement grew and early settlers were allowed to occupy the land along its banks. But the stream, being an important water source, was "jealously guarded" by the Crown.

However well guarded, the once untouched Tank Stream was becoming the tank sewer.

The problem began around 1795. Governor Hunter ordered that "any free person found using the path to the Stream which supplies the Town of Sydney by opening the fence palings for any purpose, or found keeping hogs in the neighbourhood will be forcibly removed from their home and their house pulled down. If (the person is) a prisoner the penalty to be imprisonment and hard labour for the Crown for twelve months."

Surprisingly enough, the main cause of pollution, clothes washing was still permitted.

Because the residents' "civic pride did not always measure up to what might be reasonably expected of them", the problem worsened and regulations became even stricter.

Alas, nothing was to save the Tank Stream - the once "fine stream of fresh water" was no more. It was becoming increasingly obvious to all that an alternate water supply had to be found - very quickly.

Enter John Busby. A mineral surveyor and engineer, Busby arrived from England in February 1824, commissioned to find the desperately needed water supply.

His recommendation was a water supply from the Lachlan swamps (Centennial Park Ponds) to be carried by means of a tunnel to Hyde Park. His proposal was quickly accepted. So work began on "Busby's bore" in 1827.

Although not completed until ten years later, drinking water was available as early as 1830.

By 1837 the Tank Stream had become so polluted by dirty laundry and chamber pots from Pitt's Row (later to become Pitt Street) that it was described as "the thick and turbid Tank Stream which now forms one of our main sewers."

Still, it continued to be used as a laundry until the 1860's when it was enclosed in stone culverts.

This piece of Australian history disappeared forever.

Today, the Tank Stream still flows beneath the streets of Sydney. It serves as a storm water channel for the drainage of about 43 city acres, running north under the G.P.O., Hunter and Bridge Streets and Henrietta Lane, emerging at the southwest corner of Circular Quay.

We may not be able to see it. But the State Bank thinks we should remember it.

In memory of the quiet stream polluted by progress, the State Bank will erect a plaque on its Hunter Street branch.

This is one in a series of 100 to be erected around Sydney and New South Wales, noting important people, places and events that have made our State what it is today.

The plaques are one of the official Bicentennial projects of the State Bank which, along with the Royal Australian Historical Society, the Sydney City Council, hopes to bring the history of the State to the people of the State. After all, the State Bank, with its beginnings in 1819, has grown with New South Wales. And helped New South Wales grow. The State Bank. Making history since 1819.

FOR 22 YEARS TIME STOPPED STILL AT THE G.P.O. ---

- Good Weekend
Sydney Morning Herald
21st February 1987

"General Post Office - This building incorporating the site of an earlier post office and the first electric telegraphic office, was constructed between 1866 and 1887 to the design of James Barnet, Colonial Architect.
-R.A.H.S. 11"

It took 10 years to design, build and complete the Sydney G.P.O. clock tower. And a war to bring it down. And down it stayed. For 22 more years.

The tower was a landmark in Sydney until 1942 when the threat of Japanese raiders using it as a bomb target caused its hasty removal.

Yet the tower wasn't always part of the G.P.O. And the G.P.O. wasn't always part of Sydney's postal and telegraphic services.

In 1809 Isaac Nichols Esq., assistant to the Colony's Naval Officer, was appointed Australia's first Postmaster. Nichols had a colourful past: transported for stealing a dinkey, he worked his way to become Principal Superintendent of Convicts.

30th April 1809 must have been quite a day for Isaac. The Sydney Gazette noted: "Complaints having been made to the Lt. Governor, that numerous frauds have been committed by individuals on board ships, on their arrival at this port, and personating others, by which they have obtained possession of letters and parcels to the great injury of those for whom they were intended.

The Lt. Governor, in order to prevent the practice of such frauds in future, has been pleased to establish an office, at which all parcels and letters addressed to the inhabitants of this Colony shall be deposited, previous to their distribution, which office shall be under the direction of Mr Isaac Nichols (Assistant to the Naval Officer), who has entered into security for the faithful discharge of the trust reposed in him."

And where was Australia's first post office? In Isaac's house, High Street (now George Street) near the Queen's Wharf (now Circular Quay West).

The flow of letters and parcels soon required more than a house. The post office was next moved to a wooden hut on the King's Wharf, thence to George Panton's house on Bunkers Hill. (George was Isaac's successor.) In that same year, 1826, it was moved again to Bent Street. Early in 1829, it was moved again, to the old Police Station in George Street opposite Barrack Street, the site of the present building (now Martin Place).

But not even a Police Station could hold the burgeoning number of sorters and clerks, so a temporary move was made while the old "Police Station" was demolished for the construction of the G.P.O. But it would be another 11 years before the G.P.O. would open for its first customer.

The colonial architect planned a building running a city block, from George Street to Pitt Street. Difficulties ensued and the plans were only approved when it was agreed to build in two stages.

The first building fronted George Street. It comprised a basement, ground floor, mezzanine, first floor, second floor and third floor.

It had no tower, but it did have a gallery of morse code operators for the telegraph service.

On the evening of 1st September 1874, 8 years after building had commenced, the Sydney G.P.O. was declared open with a "conversazione" for 1500 dignatories at which The Hon. Saul Samuel, Postmaster General of NSW officiated.

The tower was part of the Pitt Street development. But not until 1891 were the Sydney gentry able to set their fob-watches by the tower clock and chimes.

On its completion the Post Office had cost £330,000, considerably more than estimated. And the 1890s were austere times for Sydney.

Yet for hundreds of thousands of Sydney residents, the G.P.O. and its tower has been a landmark in Sydney.

From 1828 horsedrawn carriages carried mails to and from the Post Office. In 1831 "receipt boxes" served the town. For twopence a letter would be transported anywhere within the town. And for a few pence more, to country post offices.

The first recorded hand stamp was used in 1813. The first adhesive stamp was issued in 1850 (The Sydney Views). In 1838 the Post Office was issuing pre-paid "letter sheets" bearing an embossed design: a first in the world.

To-day the Post Office clock tower is no longer Sydney's tallest landmark. But the Post Office is a landmark to architectural vision and persistence, and a pillar of postal services for more than 178 years.

That's why the State Bank has noted the historic importance of the G.P.O. with the plaque. By 1988 there will be 100 such plaques to commemorate the State Bank's long history in N.S.W. The State Bank is proud to commemorate the Bicentenary with the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Sydney City Council.

The State Bank making history since 1819.
