

# History Week 2020

## Introduction

History Week is a state-wide event that is held annually and organised by the History Council of New South Wales. This year History Week runs from 5th September – 13<sup>th</sup> September. Every year a new theme is selected. This year's theme is 'History: what is it good for?'

Due to the impact of Covid-19, Camden Libraries is presenting an online exhibition relating to how history can help our local community understand the changes that are ongoing in our area and how history can be used to connect our past with our future.

Often, existing places and buildings are repurposed to accommodate changing needs of residents. We are illustrating this by looking at changes to some specific places in our local environment and generating connections between 'Then and Now', which is the Library's theme for this year's History Week.

As part of our History Week event on Camden Libraries website, you will find links to interactive jigsaw puzzles using historic photos from 'Camden Images', an online Preschool Storytime, Oral History interviews, a list of where to find information for further research and details of other events being held in Camden during the event.

## History: what is it good for?

### Carrington Convalescent Hospital



CHS 1979, Carrington Centennial Convalescent Hospital 1890s, *Camden Historical Society*.

Carrington Convalescent Hospital was built on 500 acres of land, donated by Dutch born music publisher W.H. Paling in 1888. The property known as 'Grasmere', had 2 cottages, livestock, a dairy, and irrigation and was valued at £20,000. Mr Paling also donated £10,000 to construct and establish the proposed 'Carrington Centennial Hospital for Convalescents and Incurables'.



CL0135, Masonic cottage in the grounds of Carrington, built in 1890, *Camden Library Local Studies*.

The hospital was a centennial gift to the people of NSW. The hospital's name was in honour of Lord Carrington who was Governor of NSW at the time of centenary (1888). It was opened on 20 August 1890. One of the existing buildings, Grassmere Cottage, was used to treat young children.



CL 0138, Inside the pharmacy at Carrington late 1890s, *Camden Library Local Studies*.

By 1925, Carrington's Board of Directors reported that assistance had been given to 25,570 patients in the 25 years since it had commenced operation.



CL 0136, Inside Carrington late 1890s, *Camden Library Local Studies*.

The hospital provided work for many local residents, as well as buying much of its daily necessities such as fresh bread, from local business and farms.



CHS 0872, View from Carrington across farmlands, *Camden Historical Society*.

Its own farm produce and dairy meant that the cost per bed per patient was able to be kept to a minimum. By 1945, 49,475 patients had been admitted to the hospital. The usual length of stay was 10 – 14 days.



CL 0424, Carrington Retirement Village with the original building at the bottom of the photo 1998, *Camden Library Local Studies*.

The hospital adapted to changing times with additional buildings constructed as needed. In 1973 it became an Aged Care facility. Its residential aged care facility services include individual living units, respite and palliative care, and many other onsite services such as medical and podiatry. The medical centre was built in 1981.

Nowadays, Carrington provides accommodation for older people including a Day Centre, Aged Care Nursing Home, Mary MacKillop Hostel, Paling Court Hostel as well as self-care units.



CHS 2259, Macquarie House in foreground, the dam and retirement village 2009, *Camden Historical Society*

## Swimming at Camden



CHS 2212, Swimming at Camden Weir 1917, *Camden Historical Society*.

Although Camden is not that close to the ocean, swimming has always been a favourite pastime of our residents. The Nepean River and its tributaries have provided many beautiful and easily accessible spots along their banks for swimming and picnics.



CLS 0254, Swimming at Big Sandy 1920s, *Camden Library Local Studies*.

Swimming was an activity that was inexpensive and very popular during hot, dry summer weather. There was an active swimming club that held races in the Nepean.



CHS 0141, Races at Nepean River 1917, *Camden Historical Society*.

Favourite spots were found in nearby Menangle as well as Burragorang before the valley was flooded in the late 1950s.



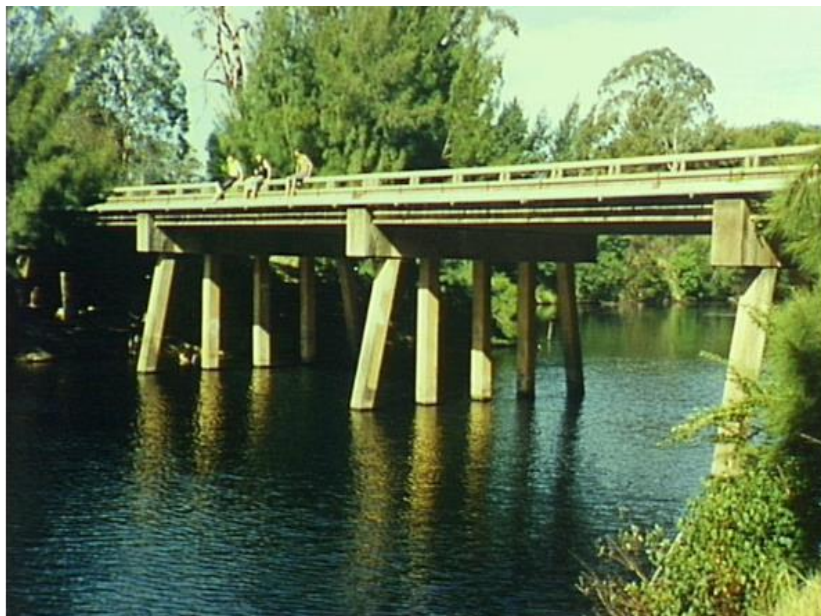
CHS 0110, Swimming Carnival 1910, *Camden Historical Society*.

Of course, as our community grew and its infrastructure was developed, a need for a public swimming pool was identified and the swimming centre in Camden was opened. The Camden War Memorial Pool was opened 12 December 1964.



CHS 0048, Swimming Pool at Camden, 1995, *Camden Historical Society*.

In current times, our rapid local growth has resulted in Camden Council's opening the Mt Annan Leisure Centre which includes swimming facilities as well as the Curry Reserve Water Park. However, some things in our community will never change. Anyone driving along Macquarie Grove Road and crossing the bridge at the bottom of the hill will know that this part of the river remains a well-used swimming hole among young people with the bridge a convenient spot to jump into the waters of the Nepean River.



CHS 1098, Macquarie Grove Bridge 2004, *Camden Historical Society*.

## Whiteman Family Business – Argyle Street Camden



CHS 1249, Whiteman Store Camden 1890s, *Camden Historical Society*.

Camden's built environment has evolved over the years, but respect for its history has meant that many of its original buildings are still standing, although their original purpose may have changed. Argyle Street, the main road through Camden, holds many fine examples of early buildings.



CHS 1014, Whiteman's Store Camden 1900s, *Camden Historical Society*.

Whiteman's arcade, 86–100 Argyle Street Camden, is a fine example of the legacy left by a family who were integral to the growth and development of commerce in Camden. Originally the business was established in 1878 by George Spencer Whiteman and his brother Charles Thomas. It operated as a produce store on the corner of Argyle and Oxley



Streets. George moved to Victoria and Charles relocated the store to its Argyle Street location in 1889.



CHS 1015, Whiteman's Store Camden 1923, *Camden Historical Society*.

It was leased for a few years to the Woodhill family in the 1900s. It then became a department store, selling men's and women's clothing as well as household items. The store's name changed to F.C. Whiteman and Sons and was still operating as a department store in the 1950s under the direction of Fred Whiteman.



CHS 1012, Whiteman's Store Camden 1978, *Camden Historical Society*.

The family were also well known throughout Camden as members were involved in local government and charitable works. Charles served as an alderman Camden Council and was also elected mayor. They lived nearby at 'Melrose' in John Street and often hosted social gatherings and tennis matches at their home. The family also had connections, by marriage to other early pioneer families in the area, such as the McIntosh family of historic Denbigh at Cobbitty.



CHS 3237, Whiteman family home showing the tennis court. c. 1920s, *Camden Historical Society*.

Throughout the years, the building was extended and modified several times. The store was operated by four generations of the Whiteman family. It provided employment for many local people. The building held commercial space that was the meeting place for Camden Council for a short period of time, in the latter years of the 1920s.



CHS 1307, Argyle Street Camden showing the front of Whiteman's Store 1980s, *Camden Historical Society*.

After 123 years of operation, the business closed in 2000. At the time of its closure, the shop was known as Argyle Living. The building still operates as commercial premises.



CHS 2317, Whiteman family, c.1910s, *Camden Historical Society*.

## Camden School of Arts (Camden Library)



CHS 0992, John Street looking towards St John's Church, St Paul's Catholic Church lower left, then School of Arts building 1870s, *Camden Historical Society*.

Located at 40 John Street Camden, the Camden School of Arts was built from community donations and a small government grant. The land was half of a property belonging to Lazarus Chapman. The other half of the block was used to build the Temperance Hall (Fire Station). The School of Arts was built 1865-1866 by Charles Furner and opened by James Macarthur in 1866. It was purchased by Camden Council in 1928 and used for some time as the Council Chambers and library. The first Council meeting was held upstairs in the building on 24 April 1889.



CHS 1128, John Street Camden showing School of Arts building on the left hand side taken between 1896 and 1912, *Camden Historical Society*.

The Council was not permanently based there until August of the same year and continued operating from there until the 1 October 1924 when it relocated to Whiteman's building in Argyle Street. However, Council Chambers were moved back to the John Street building in 1930. Curiously, the building had also been briefly used as a facility to sell fish. In September 1921, the State Trawling Industry wanted to offer Camden people the opportunity to buy fresh fish as found at Sydney Fish Markets. The fish arrived packed in ice and were sold out on the first few occasions until a very hot November Day when they arrived rotten and stinking from the heat. This saw the end of the venture.



CHS 0859, Camden Fire Station and Public Library 1996, *Camden Historical Society*.

The building now houses the Camden branch of Camden Libraries. It adjoins Camden Museum, which opened in 1970 and is located at the rear of the building. Camden Area Family History Society's room is also part of the complex. The School of Arts building is also connected to the old Temperance Hall that later became Camden Fire Station in 1916 (and is now part of the library), by the Galleria which was constructed in 2007. It is the hub connecting Camden Council's History Complex.



CLS 0511, Camden Library with Galleria 2011, *Camden Local Studies*

For more historic photographs in our collection, please check out our *Camden Images* website.